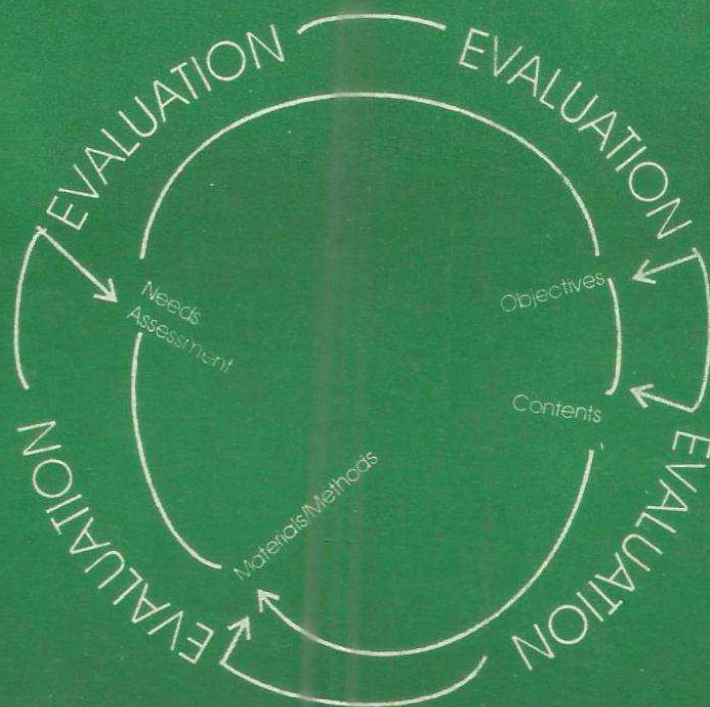


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# **REDESIGNING AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS FOR VOCATIONAL RELEVANCE IN NIGERIA**

**BY**

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## **Abstract**

Agricultural Education Curriculum in operation in tertiary institutions Nigeria have single-tract focus of production of agriculture teachers and instructors rather than agriculture vocational practitioners. This paper proposes a redesigning of the curriculum to make it vocationally relevant in Nigeria.

## **Instruction**

The concept and practices of agricultural education is to make individuals acquire relevant agricultural skills for entry into, and for effective and efficient performance in chosen agriculture occupational area. Agricultural training for youths to acquire relevant agriculture occupational skills for effective and sustained engagement in any chosen agriculture occupational area. It is meant to ~~ganger~~ interest, positive attitude and enthusiasm toward agriculture as an occupation.

The curriculum in agricultural education is a planned and developed learning activities, the content of which is derived from the individual and societal needs, for the development of the in-school youths, using varying pedagogical and evaluation approaches for feedback. Agricultural education curriculum in tertiary institutions is believed to be vocational oriented and designed for directed instructions and learning. The claim may be justified by the programme having vocational education departments as the base in the Colleges of Education and Universities. The programme by its curriculum operation should turn out skilled vocational agriculture practitioners for sustained engagement in agriculture entrepreneurs of choice as means of livelihood. The authors experience in the teaching of agricultural education indicate that the curriculum in the Colleges of Education and Universities have a single-tract focus of production of agriculture teachers and instructors rather than vocational agriculture practitioners. The situation is seen to create a gap in the concept, practices and in the expectations of the society on the occupational roles of agricultural education programmes. Based on the foregoing, this paper therefore proposes a redesigning of agricultural education curriculum of tertiary institutions to make it vocationally relevant in Nigeria.

## **The Philosophy and Objective of Agricultural Education**

Philosophy is held by Olaitan (1996) as the process of making clarifications, justifications, verifications and criticism of an idea, belief, concept or practices. The philosophy of agricultural education emphasizes utilitarianism based on the diversified



scope of the programme as well as the numerous problems that arise from the agriculture world of work.

It therefore means that agricultural education contents, objectives, materials and instructional strategies are derivable from the various problems and tasks of agriculture world of work making provisions for flexibility and changes.

The Philosophy of agricultural education caters for individuals, leaderships and citizenships development, hands-on experiences, vocational guidance, problem-solving, community-relations, adults, further education and so on.

Agricultural education can be explained as an all-embracing educational and training programme directed toward satisfying the needs of in-school youths and those out-of-school as well as adult farmers on relevant agriculture vocational skills. In Nigeria agricultural education is a programme in the tertiary level of education based mainly in the Colleges of Education and Universities. The Curriculum is both professional and technical. The professional aspects include programme development, evaluation, pedagogy, and the technical include animal and crop production, soil fertility maintenance, agricultural economics, fisheries etc.

Generally agricultural education is associated economics, fisheries etc.

- Helping the youths and other would be vocational agriculture personnel to acquire the relevant skills.
- Assisting youths and adults in developing positive attitudes, understanding and abilities regarding agriculture.
- Developing in the youths and adults, the understanding of the interrelationship between agriculture and other sectors of the economy.
- Developing in the youths and adults the appreciation of rural resources, heritage and their influence on agriculture.
- Helping youths and adults to have insight into the influence of research on agriculture.
- Creating awareness in the youths and adults farmers of governmental policies on agriculture and so on.

In the Universities, agricultural education programme curriculum is designed to achieve such objectives as are articulated in the programme curriculum, of the University of Uyo (2000). They include:

- To prepare teachers with the right attitudes to, and knowledge/professional competence in vocational agriculture.
- To develop in the trainee teachers the appropriate communication skills for effective transmission of agricultural information to the students in the context of their environment.
- Equipping the student teachers with adequate knowledge and ability to establish and manage a model school farm effectively.
- Providing sound background to enhance further academic and professional progressional progression of the student teacher.

An analysis of agricultural education curriculum of both the Colleges of Education and the curriculum goes beyond the preparation of agriculture teachers and instructors to the preparation of vocational agriculture practitioners.



## **The Need for Redesigning of Agricultural Education Curriculum of Tertiary Institutions.**

Agricultural education programme has the mission of preparing agriculture vocational personnel well versed in the intellectual, attitudinal and in the psycho-productive skills to become useful and effective in the society.

Federal Government of Nigeria (1998) articulated in the National Policy on Education (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), that for the benefit of all citizens, the country's educational goals shall be clearly set out in terms of their relevance to the needs of the individuals and those of the society, in consonance with the realities of our environment and the modern world. According to Olaitan (1998), Nigeria is at the moment experiencing structural changes economically, socially and in employment opportunities and employment patterns. To meet up with the changes demands an adaptable curriculum particularly that of agricultural education towards vocational relevance.

The present need of the nation is that of tackling of poverty among the citizens through making of the youths employable and employed. The need can only be actualized through relevant training in agricultural education with vocational oriented curriculum for the acquisition of needed skills. While it is legitimate to appropriate the relevance of the current agricultural education curriculum in the validity of the curriculum in the light of preparing potential vocational agriculture practitioners thereby satisfying the employment needs of the nation hence poverty reduction.

The benefits of, and the relevant training in agriculture according to Ekong (2000a) are inexhaustive. Such benefits are the provision of training for skill acquisition; generation of surpluses in production, creating wealth for individuals and the nation; gingering the development of agriculture industrial based enterprises; improvement in food security as well as good nutrition and health of the citizens. It could be agreed that the singled-tract focus of agricultural education curriculum seems to neglect the many benefits of agricultural education curriculum to individuals and a nation. The situation then calls for a redesigning of agricultural education curriculum for a more dynamic and utilitarian education for Nigeria.

### **Curriculum Problems of Agricultural Education**

Many curriculum problems are associated with agricultural education programme in Nigeria's institution of higher learning. Among them are:

#### **Concepts Definition**

There is a mix-up and lack of understanding of the concepts of agriculture and agricultural education and therefore the curriculum definition for distinction. The society is dynamic and changes with time. It calls for definition and re-definition of the concept and practices of agricultural education to accommodate the societal contemporary agricultural occupational issues. Supporting the foregoing idea, Olaitan (1998) stressed the need for redefinition of programmes to incorporate needed societal changes for the production of functional and versatile individuals.



### **Curriculum Relevance to Societal Needs**

One of the problems of agricultural education programme is its relevance to the needs of the society and of individuals. As observed by Ekong (2000b), agricultural education in the universities has for a longtime been dangling with such problems as the balance between the content and pedagogy; integration of theoretical and practical components into organized pedagogical processes and the satisfaction of non-teaching professional and productive skill needs. Agricultural education through training in schools should provide succor by preparing and producing youths with relevant agriculture vocational skills for sustained living. Experience show, according to Ekong (1997) that agriculture training in schools, rather than producing youths with skills, turn out a growing member of unskilled, unproductive and disillusioned youths who parade the streets for white collar jobs.

A re-examination of the relevance of agricultural education curriculum in satisfying the employment needs of Nigerian youths in the present dispensation becomes imperative.

### **The Balance Between Contents and Pedagogy**

The contents of agricultural education curriculum and pedagogy seem to operate in parallel lines. Little of the demonstrative pedagogy seems to operate in parallel lines. Little of the demonstrative pedagogy on the field have been applied for emphasis on the acquisition of psycho-productive skills. It should be noted that a functional curriculum is a blue print that prescribe the contents and suitable pedagogy as the instrument of educating and developing the learners. Consequently, Ekpo (1991) asserted that a thorough understanding of the dynamics of curriculum development and implementation is required of stakeholders in the therefore calls for a redesign of agricultural education curriculum to balance the content with the pedagogy.

### **Integrating Theories with the Practical**

Instructions in agricultural education in most cases do not match theories with practices. This of course reduces the rate of internationalization by learners. It should be noted that hands-on experiences on the field is the beginning of acquisition of relevant agriculture vocational skills for self or paid employment. It then becomes essential to redesign the agricultural education to make it practical oriented.

### **Redesigning of Agricultural Education Curriculum of Tertiary Education in Nigeria**

A move toward redesigning of agricultural education curriculum of tertiary institutions will mean an extension of the intellectual, attitudinal and psycho-productive abilities in agriculture vocations in board perspectives to the youths in schools. The dynamic nature of the society, according to Olaitan (1998), justifies the needs of the time to set re-oriented goals. The necessity of redesigning agricultural education curriculum is not doubtful, as it will positively make for desired changes toward vocational ends.

The redesigning should be as follows

1. Developing vocational agriculture programmes in specific areas such as
  - Animal production vocations
    - (a) Poultry, Piggery, Rabbitry, Goatery, Snail production, etc.
    - (b) Animal product processing and marketing
    - (c) Animal health care



(d) **Animal nutrition etc**

• **Crop Production Vocations**

- (a) **Arable crop production**
- (b) **Plantation crop production**
- (c) **Vegetable crop production**
- (d) **Ornamental crop production**
- (e) **Forage crop production**
- (f) **Fruit crop production**

• **Off-farm Vocations**

- (a) **Farm tools production**
- (b) **Agricultural machinery maintenance**
- (c) **Agricultural business management**
- (d) **Soil and water management**
- (e) **Farm electricity etc**

The vocations in the different farm and off-farm vocations should be the specialization with all the details learnt as a vocation. Certificates awarded should be in the specialty areas as licenses for practicing.

2. **Agriculture teaching certificate programme should be developed separately and should take a short time span, as it is only pedagogical oriented for those who may want to have additional vocational certificate for teaching of the agriculture vocational areas already qualified in.**

**Vocational Implications of Redesigning Agricultural Education Curriculum**

The implications are that problems of agricultural education curriculum in tertiary institutions will be removed. The beneficiaries of the programme will be vocationally versatile with full vocational skills acquired plus the teaching certificate for teaching the specialized areas. The tendency of total dependence on the government for salaries will be reduced. Every vocational agriculture expert would employ the acquired skill for self-employment in addition would become a reality.

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