



AFRICAN JOURNAL OF ALLIED EDUCATION

**PUBLISHED IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION
ENUGU STATE UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY, ENUGU.**

VOL. 3 NO 1.

ISSN: 2006-151X

SEPTEMBER 2009

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM FOR ENHANCEMENT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIAN YOUTHS

EKONG, A. O. (PH.D)

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IBE, V.S.O.

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IKUTAL, AJIGO

Department of Vocational Education, University of Uyo, PMB 1017, Uyo.

Abstract

This paper stressed the inevitability of modifying agricultural education curriculum of the Colleges of Education and the Universities towards entrepreneurship development of Nigerian youths. It has discussed the broad aims and objectives of agricultural education, the philosophies and objectives of the programme in the Colleges of Education and Universities; the curriculum problems; the need for modification of agricultural education towards entrepreneurship development of the youths. The paper has also discussed the farm and non-farm enterprise areas relevant to youths employment needs as well as the implications of agricultural education curriculum modification on entrepreneurship development of Nigerian youths.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Curriculum, Agricultural Education

Introduction

A curriculum is an organized set of formal education and/or training intensions deliberately programmed to promote the type of learning which makes it possible for an individual to function effectively in an occupation on graduation, either as an employee or as an entrepreneur (Gbamanja, 1990). In agricultural education, it is a planned and developed learning activities with content derivation from the individual needs and that of the society for the purpose of developing in-school youths, using varying pedagogical and evaluation approaches for feed-back.

Entrepreneurship is explained by Ekong (2008) as covering the series of enterprise dexterity, proficiency, competence, adaptability, prowess of

creativity, taking and bearing risks of the agriculture enterprise, managing innovating and manipulating conditionalities to derive sustained benefits.

Entrepreneurship in agricultural education on the other hand, refers to the ability of graduates in an agricultural enterprise trained to be self employed or employed or train others on specific agricultural enterprise.

Agricultural education curriculum by implication should be vocational oriented and designated for directed instructions for the purpose of turning out skilled vocational agriculture practitioners for sustained engagement in agriculture enterprises of choice as means of livelihood (Ekong, 2001). The curriculum of agricultural education in colleges of education and universities seem to have a single-track focus of producing theoretical agriculture teachers and instructors instead of vocational practitioners in agriculture. This observation is based on the current trend of turning out unskilled youths who roam the streets in search of white collar jobs rather than engaging themselves in personal agriculture enterprise of interest.

The situation of production of unskilled youths by colleges of education and universities earlier observed, has indeed highlighted a gap in the concepts, and practices which has fallen short of the societal expectations. The present day training processes in agricultural education is more of the transfer of theoretical concepts in the classroom with less of, if at all, of the hands-on experiences on the field for the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills. This group of somewhat inadequately prepared youths are expected to prepare the youths in the secondary school system. One would of course imagine the quality of products that would be expected from the secondary schools as the student cannot be better than the teacher.

The situation, calls for the need for modification of agricultural education programmes of the Colleges of Education and Universities towards entrepreneurship development of Nigerian youths. Modification explains the change to production oriented agricultural education with distinct vocational skills towards entrepreneurship development of Nigerian youths. Such programmes would enable the youths to opt for specified agriculture enterprises of interest and would be capable of sustained benefits in the enterprise.

The Aims & Objectives of Agricultural Education Programmes in Nigeria

Agricultural education is explained by Ekong (2000) 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 and competencies. In Nigeria, agricultural education is a programme of the tertiary level of education mounted in the Colleges of Education and the Universities.

Its philosophy emphasizes utilitarianism based on the diverse scope and numerous problems which arise from the numerous agriculture occupations, Agricultural education contents, objectives, materials and instructional strategies are derived from the various problems and tasks of the various agriculture occupations, providing for flexibility and changes which should provide for individuals' leadership and citizenship development, hands-on-experiences, vocational guidance, problem solving, community development at the professional and technical levels.

The professional aspects of agricultural education emphasize programme development, pedagogy, evaluation while the technical aspect emphasize animal and crop production, soil fertility maintenance, agricultural economics, fisheries etc. with specialized practical contents that make for skill development and acquisition.

Agricultural education in institutions of higher learning generally aims at achieving such general objectives, as articulated by Ekong (2001) as follows:

- (i) To help the youths and other would-be vocational agricultural personnel acquire the relevant skills.
- (ii) To assist youths and adults in developing positive attitudes, understanding and abilities regarding agriculture.
- (iii) To develop in youths and adults the understanding of the inter-relationship between agriculture and other sectors of the economy.
- (iv) To develop in youths and adults the understanding and appreciation of agriculture as a vocational and leisure activity.
- (v) To develop in the youths and adults the appreciation of rural resources, heritages and their influence on agriculture.
- (vi) To help youths and adults to have insight into the influence of research on agriculture. Specifically the programme as extracted from Agricultural Education programme handbook from the University of Uyo, it is:
 - To aid students in developing the professional competencies and skills for natural resources management.
 - To provide for continuing intellectual growth, services and leadership vital to agriculture and society.

The philosophy and objectives of agricultural education in the Colleges of Education and the Universities would be as follows:

1. In Colleges of Education

In the College of Education level, agricultural education has the philosophy woven with the philosophy of agriculture for self-reliance.

The focus is the provision of manpower-teachers endowed with a balanced approach between principles and practices of agriculture for the achievement of academic and vocational ends. From the philosophy, the National Commission on Colleges of Education (NCCE) in the minimum standards specifies the objectives of agricultural education at College of Education level to include:

- To prepare teachers with the right to and knowledge professional competence in vocational agriculture
 - To produce teachers who will be capable of motivating students to acquire interests in, and aptitude for agriculture
 - To develop in the student teachers the appropriate communication skills for effective transmission of agricultural information to the student in the context of their environment.
 - To equip the student teachers with adequate knowledge and ability to establish and manage a model school farm effectively and;
 - To provide a sound background to enhance further academic and professional progression of the student teachers.
2. **In the University**
In the Universities, agricultural education is designed for students planning to teach vocational and technical agriculture at the secondary and post-secondary level or preparing for position in agricultural extension and other agricultural careers. It is also for those who wish to become engaged in the educational work of agricultural industry and public relations.

A critical analysis of agricultural education curriculum, aims and objectives in both Colleges of Education and Universities point to the fact that the focus of the curriculum goes beyond the preparation of agriculture teachers and instructors, to the training of potential practitioners in the numerous agricultural enterprises. The situation has been a bothering issue in academic circles formally and informally as discussed under the curriculum problems:

Curriculum Problems of Agricultural Education

The problems of agricultural education curriculum in Nigeria's tertiary education is multidimensional. They include:

1. Single-Track Focus

The curriculum of agricultural education in Nigeria is generally unidirectional as it emphasizes basically the training of professional teachers and tutors. This is evident firstly from the objectives of agricultural education in the Colleges of Education which emphasize academic and technical training of trainees to manifest the following:

- the right attitude to, knowledge and professional competencies for teaching agriculture
- the capabilities of motivating students to acquire interest in, attitude and aptitude for agriculture
- appropriate communication skills for effective transmission of agricultural information to their students in the context of their environment
- adequate knowledge and ability to establish and manage a model school farm effectively
- sound background to enhance further academic and professional progression (Ekong, 2001).

Each of the objectives listed emphasize proficiency in agriculture instructional delivery with little or no emphasis on specialization with relevant skills in any agricultural enterprise. It is for this reason that Olaitan (1996), warned that restricting youths and adults of agricultural education to only the teaching profession will result in the production of graduates who will only be interested in white-collar jobs as teachers. Such graduates he said, would never see the need for settling down in any agriculture vocation.

2. Clear Definition of Agricultural Education Concept

There is the problem of clear definition of the concept of agricultural education in every respect. Ekong (2001) observed that there is a mix-up and lack of understanding of the concept of agricultural education and therefore clear definition for distinction becomes imperative. The society, according to Ekong (2001) is dynamic and changes with time, and therefore calls for the need to define and re-define the concept and practices of agricultural education to accommodate the contemporary issues of agricultural occupations. Strengthening the assertion. Olaitan (1998) had earlier stressed the need to redefine agricultural education programme to incorporate needed, social changes for the production of functional and versatile individuals with relevant agricultural entrepreneurship skills.

3. **Non-Relevance of Agricultural Education Curriculum to Societal Employment Needs**

The extent to which agricultural education curriculum is relevant to the needs of the society and of individuals is still contentious. Umoh and Etuk (2003), held that the goals and objectives of a curriculum are drawn from the needs of the society and that of the individual. They further stressed that before the aims, goals and specific objectives of a curriculum can be achieved, appropriate means are required.

In his view, Ekong (2000) observed that agricultural education in the universities has for a long time been dangling with such problems as: balance between the content and methods, integration of theories with practical components into organized methodological processes and the satisfaction of non-teaching professionals and productive skill needs of beneficiaries. It is expected that agricultural education through training in schools should provide succour by preparing and producing youths with relevant agricultural entrepreneurship skills for sustained living as entrepreneurs. But, Ekong (1997) had observed that agricultural education programmes in schools rather than producing youths with adequate entrepreneurial skills, turn out a large number of unskilled, unproductive and disillusioned youths who parade the streets for white collar jobs.

A re-assessment of the relevance of agricultural education curriculum line with entrepreneurial skill needs of Nigerian youths in the present dispensation is very necessary.

4. **Inappropriate Instructional Delivery of Contents**

One of the problems of agricultural education is the inappropriate methodology employed in instructional delivery of the contents. The curriculum contents and the methods of delivery seem to be in parallel lines. It is quite frustrating that in the teaching of a practical-oriented discipline like agricultural education, very little of the demonstrative methods on the field are effected, thereby negating the acquisition of agriculture entrepreneurial skills in keeping with psycho-productive skill needs of youths. According to Umoh and Etuk (2003), a functional curriculum is a blue-print that prescribes the content and suitable pedagogy as the instrument of educating and developing the learners.

This is in line with the earlier position of Ekpo (1991) who asserted that the understanding of the dynamics of curriculum development and implementation were required of stakeholders in the crucial task of educating at every stage of the formal education process. This understanding therefore, calls for a redesigning of agricultural education curriculum contents with suitable methodologies to facilitate learners acquisition of needed skills and

competencies for job placement, either as employers or as entrepreneurs in any agricultural enterprise other than teaching.

5. Inadequate Integration of Agricultural Education Theories with Practice

Agricultural education principles and practices would have been better internalized by learners if theoretical instructions were matched with practices. Hands-on-experiences on the field according to Ekong (2001), is the beginning of acquisition of relevant agricultural entrepreneurial skills for self-employment or for paid employment. How much of the hands-on experiences are the youths being exposed to in schools? It then becomes essential to effectively integrate theories with practices on the field through hands-on-experiences with a view to providing youths with the needed skills and competencies required for entrepreneurship development.

The Need for Modification of Agricultural Education Curriculum towards Entrepreneurship Development of Youths

The most urgent need of the nation today is to alleviate or eradicate poverty among youths and the adults by equipping them adequately for gainful employment in occupations of choice through entrepreneurship oriented programmes, one of which is production-oriented agricultural education. Agricultural education therefore can be regarded as an effective solution so long as it can provide graduates with vast intellectual, attitudinal and psycho-productive skills to become useful and effective in the society. To achieve the above, a move towards the modification of the methodology of teaching agricultural education towards entrepreneurship development of the youths in the school and the non-school settings become imperative. Such programmes will accommodate the varied interest and abilities of the youths. The modification of agricultural education curriculum implies modulation or changes in the programme to meet the needs of the contemporary society in terms of skill development.

The need for the change is built on the observation by Olaitan (1998) who noted that the dynamic nature of the Nigerian society justifies the need for dynamism in educational activities and programmes in line with the needs of the youths, so as to set production-oriented goals for the nation. The need to modify agricultural education programmes becomes obvious now that Nigeria needs skilled youths who would be on their own through educational programmes that will positively make for desired changes towards entrepreneurship development. The modified curriculum of agricultural education would emphasize specific agricultural enterprise areas designed to accommodate varied interest and abilities of the youths for the effective

occupational engagement as entrepreneurs. Such enterprise areas would include the farm and non-farm agricultural enterprises as articulated below:

Farm and Non-Farm Enterprise Areas Relevant to Youths Employment Needs in Nigeria

The farm and non-farm enterprise areas in which youths could be trained on the skills for occupational engagement include;

1. Animal Production Enterprise:

(a) Ruminant Production Enterprise

- (i) Cattle production enterprise
- (ii) Sheep production enterprise
- (iii) Goat production enterprise

(b) Non-ruminants Production Enterprises:

- (i) Pig production enterprise
- (ii) Rabbit production enterprise
- (iii) Poultry production enterprise

(c) Other Animal Enterprises:

- (i) Fish production enterprise
- (ii) Snail production enterprise
- (iii) Bee keeping enterprise
- (iv) Grass cutter production enterprise

(d) Animal product processing enterprise

(e) Animal product marketing enterprise

(f) Animal Health enterprise

(g) Animal Nutrition enterprise

(h) Animal Breeding enterprise

2. Crop Production Enterprise

(a) Arable crop production enterprise

(b) Plantation crop production enterprise

(c) Vegetable crop production enterprise

(d) Ornamental crop production enterprise

(e) Forage crop production enterprise

(f) Fruit crop production enterprise

(g) Crop pest and diseases management enterprise

3. Non-Farm Enterprise

(a) Farm tools production enterprise

- (b) Fertilizers production enterprise
- (c) Agro-chemicals production enterprise
- (d) Agricultural produce and products marketing enterprise
- (e) Agricultural machine maintenance enterprise
- (f) Agricultural business management enterprise
- (g) Soil and water management enterprise
- (h) Farm electricity installation and maintenance enterprise
- (i) Farm management services enterprises
- (j) Agriculture storage technology enterprise

These proposed farm and non-farm enterprise programme packages can conveniently constitute the agricultural education programmes of the Colleges of Education and the Universities with varying depths of contents based on the philosophies and objectives of the institutional level. But the focus is indepth and spcialized knowledge, interest and enterprise skills development of the beneficiaries with methodologies that could enable them impart the knowledge and skills to learners at the secondary school level.

4. The Agriculture Teaching Enterprise:

The agriculture teacher is the implementer of the curriculum in the field or school and therefore, should be trained to have indepth knowledge of a specific agriculture enterprise of his or her choice for both theoretical and practical engagements. There should be time specification adequate for the content and practice training in the enterprise areas for the trainee-teacher to acquire knowledge content and another time specification for the teaching enterprise training for exposure to series of methodologies of instructional deliveries for certification as teachers.

The recommended schematic and abridged presentation of proposed modified and adaptable curriculum of agricultural education towards entrepreneurship development will be valid in preparing potential agricultural enterprise practitioners through the Colleges of Education and Universities and would therefore satisfy the employment needs of the nation's youths for poverty alleviation and other sustained benefits.

Implications of Curriculum Modification on Entrepreneurship Development of Youths

The implication of modified agricultural education curriculum on entrepreneurship development of Nigeria youths is to the extent of abolishing the single-track focused programme. The youths trainee beneficiaries will acquire relevant agricultural entrepreneurship skills that would be imparted to youths in the school setting as well as through home project programmes. The

youths on graduation would of course become interested in an agriculture enterprise thereby, becoming self-employed and could employ as job masters. This turn around situation would go a long way to assist the government opportunities for youths, supplying the needed agricultural produce in form of food and raw materials for industries as well as citizens that will be useful to themselves and the society at large. Such benefits according to Ekong (2001) are inexhaustible and would include provision of training for skills acquisition, generation of surpluses in production, creation of wealth for individuals in the agricultural enterprises, improvement in food security as well as good nutrition and good health of the citizens. It would be accepted that the limitation of the single-track nature of agricultural education curriculum is a negation of the many benefits of agricultural education both to the individual and the Nigerian nation. It is for this reason that a call for its modification for a more dynamic and utilitarian agricultural education for the Colleges of Education and Universities in Nigeria is the right step towards producing skilled youths for self employment and poverty alleviation and therefore less dependent on the government.

Conclusion

The modification of agricultural education curriculum to emphasize specific enterprise areas would go a long way to remove the restricted and limited scope of training teachers for the teaching of agricultural science in secondary schools. It would boost entrepreneurship development of the youths. The benefits accruable to such a modified agricultural education curriculum are obvious and numerous as articulated in this paper. A concerted and focused attention to the issue of modifying agricultural education curriculum for the Nigerian education system is therefore inevitable and is proposed for consideration.

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