

ENHANCING PROFESSIONALISM AMONG AGRICULTURE TEACHERS FOR EFFECTIVE CURRICULUM DELIVERY IN THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

The teaching of agriculture at the primary and secondary school levels of our educational system is a mixture of trained professional teachers and others who have been saddled with the task basically as a secondary responsibility by the school head. The erroneous notion is that anyone can successfully teach agriculture because our fore fathers were never exposed to any form of formal education and yet were successful in farming. In some extreme cases, especially at the primary level, some teachers with no formal training in agriculture have been made agriculture teachers without regard to the issue of professionalism. Since agriculture revolves around man in totality, the issue of trained professionals to handle the subject at all formal educational levels becomes inevitable for effective curriculum delivery and the transmission of values and norms to the younger generations. This paper takes a cursory look at the meaning and imperatives of effective curriculum delivery, concepts of professionalism and the Universal Basic Education scheme, curriculum innovation and change processes in agriculture and the V model in agriculture.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching of agriculture involves identification and the provision of ideal opportunities to enable the learners acquire and demonstrate the objectives of agricultural education as and when needed. The opportunities provided by the teachers are usually in the form of developing and using appropriate content materials and in pedagogically integrated manner so as to ensure that appreciable educational values are expressed by the learners in relation to conservation of plant and animal resources.

Man's total survival revolves around agriculture – food, clothing, shelter and so on. Agriculture is as old as the creation of man and the profession which is an integrated part of our culture has passed on from generation to generation with so much improvement and sophistication in terms of production and output of farm produce. Obayan (2003) pointed out that every human society devotes a considerable amount of time and energy to transmitting its cultural heritage which are of considerable value to its younger generation. Nigeria is typically an agrarian nation considering the fact that generations from our fore fathers eke out a living by tilling the soil, tending plants and rearing animals. This goes to support the inclusion of agriculture as a core subject in the UBE scheme. Section 15 sub

section (b) and Section 19 sub section (b) of the National Policy on Education (1989) asserts the importance of inclusion of agriculture in the school curriculum.

In support of this age long profession passed on from generation to generation, Edward W. Blyden (1903) once wrote "every race has a soul and the soul of the race finds expression in its institutions...No people can profit by or be helped under institutions which are not the outcome of their own character".

The teaching of agriculture in the UBE scheme must influence progressive change in all cultural contexts which can only be best achieved through the effective curriculum delivery by the professional teachers. The school, as a social institution for education has a capacity and needs to facilitate, promote and possibly guide certain forms of value required for the overall success of the UBE scheme for our national development.

Effective curriculum delivery in agriculture is measured in terms of:

- acquisition of knowledge taught in the classroom;
- demonstration of clearly defined learning outcomes.

Outside the classroom situation and such include:

- Creative thinking and mastery regarding farm activities.

- Entrepreneurial skills and managerial abilities of on and off farm activities.
- Risk taking activities.
- Display of professional values and ethics.
- Farm and rural minded.
- Ability to transmit and impart knowledge to others.

The above components of effective curriculum delivery can only be achieved when the educational objectives are sequential. Objectives are measurable statements or parameters which are supposed to be attained at the end of a normal period or lesson of agriculture in the school. They should have the attributes of the three domain – cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Objectives can be performance or behavioural in nature. With the introduction of the Advanced Teachers' Colleges (ATTCs) in the 60's as recommended by the Ashby Commission on Higher Education, agriculture was for the first time recognised by the educational administrators as a teachable subject in the secondary schools. Since that time and until when the 6-3-3-4 system of education was introduced, agriculture has been taught as part of general education without any production bias. There was no emphasis on any particular skill or attitudes. It was taught as a science subject with emphasis on laboratory analysis and recognition of agricultural products.

The concept of professionalism in the teaching of agriculture in the Universal Basic Education Programme

Teachers Code of Conduct (2004) released by the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria describes professionalisation of the teaching profession. Quoting from "The Status of Teacher: An Instrument for its Improvement: The International Recommendation of 196 Joint Commentaries by ILO and UNESCO", the Code of Conduct informs that Recommendation 13 states that "completion of an approved course in an appropriate teacher-preparation institution should be required of all persons entering the profession".

Recommendation 21(1) states that "all teachers should be prepared in general, special and pedagogical subjects in universities or in institutions on a level comparable to universities or else in special institutions for the

preparation of teachers". The Commission on Education (2003) also supports standards and professionalism.

Section 4c sub section (a) states that "all teachers in educational institutions from pre-primary to university shall be professionally trained. Teacher education programmes shall be structured to equip teachers for the effective performance of their duties. The following institutions, among others, shall give the required professional training provided they continuously meet the required minimum standards:

- Colleges of Education
- Faculties of Education
- Institutes of Education
- National Teachers Institute
- Schools of Education in the Polytechnics
- National Institute for Nigerian Languages
- National Mathematical Centre.

The Teacher Registration Council (TRC) of Nigeria Act No. 31 of 1993 was set up among others to regulate and control the teaching profession in all its aspects and ramifications. In view of the above only teachers with NCE, B.Sc.Ed, PGDE, PGDTE and M.Ed. in Agricultural Education or any of these in addition to their previously held degree in Agriculture is professionally qualified as a teacher in a level so desired. The teaching of agriculture under the UBE scheme should arouse the interest of the learners since the subject relates with our daily activities in totality. In addition too, the professional teacher must ensure the:

- Strategic teaching of agriculture – functional and purposeful approach in teaching – interdisciplinary in nature. Visionary and goal oriented.
- Appropriate use of realia (instructional materials and teaching aids).
- Encourage use of local resources to teach.
- Regular visits and excursions – to complement class theories and expose students better to real life situations.
- Appropriate demonstration in and out of classroom situations.
- Encouraging student made products on the farm – beds, ridges, weed, harvest etc.

- ❑ Involve students in distributive ventures - sales of farm produce - eggs, vegetables, fruits etc.
- ❑ Effective use of the school farm - space management for few crops.
- ❑ Appropriate use of the school farm - should not be turned to punishment ground for stubborn students.
- ❑ Make maximum use of the continuous assessment.
- ❑ Encourage learning by discovery - mating of farm animals, pollination, acts of composting and manuring, cannibalism in animals etc.
- ❑ Proper and effective management of time on the farm during class practicals.
- ❑ Encourage skills and knowledge - weeding, feeding of farm animals, picking of eggs, harvesting, processing of crops etc.
- ❑ Teach ethical values and discourage vices like greediness, pilfering etc of farm produce.
- ❑ Be a role model and lay good examples.
- ❑ Be farm committed and rural minded.
- ❑ Make efforts to be worthwhile on the farm and such should be rewarded accordingly.
- ❑ Be fully abreast of the considerations of the selection of curriculum objectives, content and learning experiences in agriculture.

It should be recognized that this point is the most sensitive among others because it dictates the pace of everything that goes on within the classroom and outside the classroom situations. A proper understanding of this best explains the hallmark of a professional teacher of agriculture. The variables of age, experience, difficulty level of a task, interest of learners, psychology of learners, socio-economic background, government and institutional policy, infra and super structural facilities, societal needs and aspirations etc are all considered in imparting knowledge.

MEANING OF THE CURRICULUM AND ITS DELIVERY

There is no doubt that man uses curriculum to polish his knowledge and education in all spheres of human endeavours.

Cokkey-Gam (1980) explained curriculum as being derived from the Latin work "curus" which means a running course or race tracks for chariots. But in educational usage of the

word, it means a grade course of different school subjects carried on from kindergarten to tertiary level. Thus, all what pupils do or learn at school from the day they are admitted till when they leave the school may rightly come under the curriculum.

It is the core thing that the school exists for and also, the prescribed sequence on subjects required for certification. The old definition of curriculum refers to it as the cumulative tradition of organised knowledge. It is the "the omnibus content of a society's needs and aspirations which its school uses in directing the process of polishing the heart, head and hand of the individual or of the educant for effective happy living in the society".

Early educationists and philosophers view curriculum as:

1. a concept;
2. experience;
3. written plan of action;
4. a form of learning outcomes.

MAJOR PROGRAMMES OF CURRICULUM

The concept of curriculum can be fully understood by identifying three major programmes namely:

- a. **Programme of studies:** This describes the components of the curriculum that lays emphasis on the facts, ideas, knowledge, principles, theories, generalization, conclusion and general information. It includes the subject matter contained in all formal schools.
- b. **Programme of activities:** Describes the range of activities associated with various subjects in the school both organized indoor and those organized outdoor.
- c. **Programme of guidance:** This relates to the school's efforts to assist learners adjust adequately in the school environment and beyond. They are of three types - educational guidance, vocational guidance and socio-personal guidance.

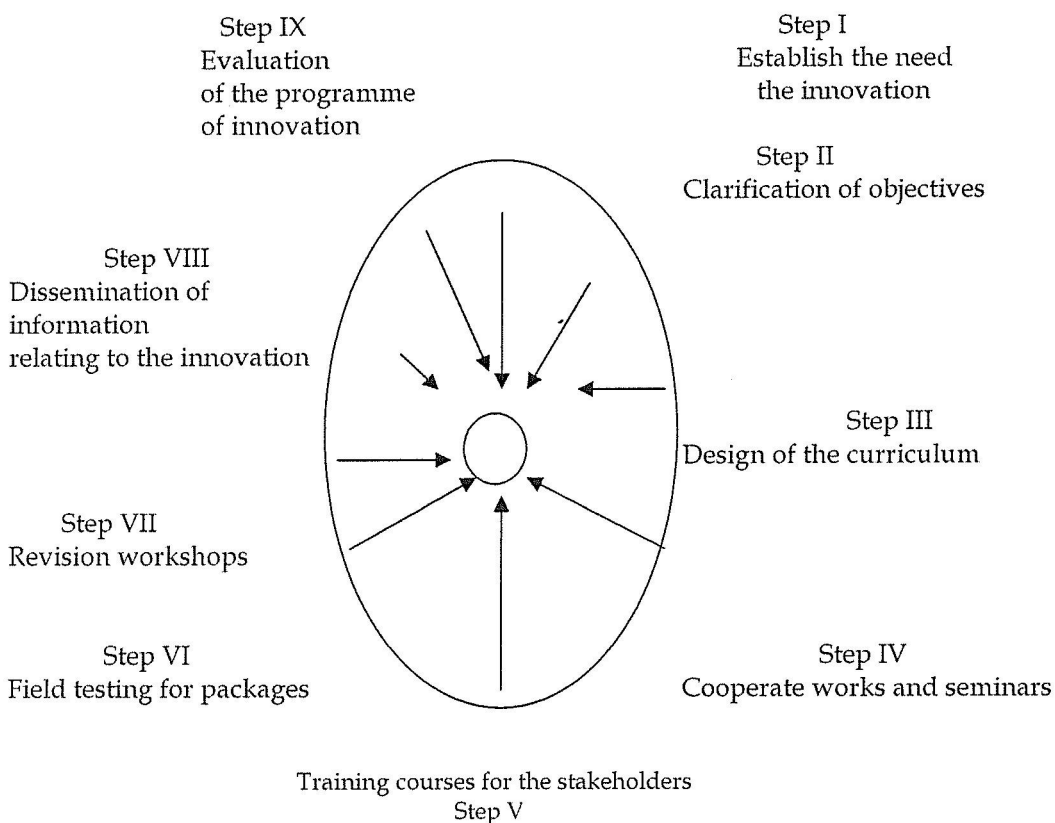
Curriculum innovation and change processes in Agriculture

Curriculum innovation whenever or wherever it takes place produces curriculum change. Curriculum innovation and

curriculum change are closely related. The relationship between the two is means-ends type. Curriculum innovation is the process whereby we attain the goals or end of curriculum change. Curriculum change is thus the goal of curriculum innovation. When curriculum does not change, education becomes static.

The process of curriculum innovation and change in agriculture means the step by step or stage by stage in bringing about curriculum change in the subject or a specific area of the

curriculum or an aspect of a programme in a farmer education in agriculture. Such could be in any area of agricultural education curriculum viz: curriculum content, learning experiences, teaching methods and techniques, instructional objectives and lesson delivery, instructional and training materials, manpower needs in schools, relevant text and workbooks etc. It is important to know that the needs and aspirations of individuals and the society do change from time to time.



STEPS

- (i) Establish the need for innovation.
- (ii) Clarification of objectives.
- (iii) Design the method of approach in solving the issue.
- (iv) Organise workshop on the issue.
- (v) Training courses for teachers
- (vi) Field testing of the curriculum packages
- (vii) Revision workshop
- (viii) Dissemination
- (ix) Evaluation

MANPOWER, DEVELOPMENT OF EFFECTIVE CURRICULUM DELIVERY

Since there are glaring deficiencies in the traditional form of agricultural education and training delivery in Nigeria, many alternative strategies are currently being tried in an innovative educational delivery. Such include:

1. Regular in-service training for teachers and trainers – sandwich courses, training courses etc. for NCE, degree, diplomas and postgraduate programmes in agriculture.
2. Workshops and seminars on contemporary issues in agricultural education and training for teachers, administrators etc.
3. Collaboration with non-governmental organizations to expose institutions to new grounds, e.g. Leventis, JDPC, FADAMA, OFAR
4. Distance learning and part time courses.
5. Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) to expose students to practicals on the field with adults.
6. Reformed library and information technology services through internet.
7. Linking educational institutions with rural communities and farm settlements.
8. Regular field trips, excursions and cross visits by trainees.

SOCIETAL GAINS OF THE EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF THE CURRICULUM IN AGRICULTURE

The advent of the western type of education was with the introduction of 4Rs – Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic and Religion which are now recognized as integral parts of the various school subjects at our formal institutions. The coming of the missionaries and colonialists in Nigeria brought a new era in the history of both agricultural education and development in Nigeria. This did not only bring a change in pattern of agriculture but also initiated a formal agricultural education curriculum delivery. As time progressed, teachers of agriculture were brought in to teach in institutions with defined formal roles and responsibilities. In realisation of the roles that agriculture can play in making a country to be self reliant and truly independent, the Government through the National Policy on Education (1989) regarding the 6-3-3-4 system of education made agriculture as one of the core subjects with much emphasis on practicals. The educational policy provides a programme of mass participation and orientation towards maximum food production for the country.

For education pursuits, as any other pursuit in the field of human endeavour, quality is a sine qua non. What is truly crucial to the success of any school programme is the teacher or instructor. It is through a thoroughly bred and qualified teachers of agriculture that the students and the society at large can benefit immeasurably. The teaching of the subject at the secondary school level must be made interesting and realistic to appease to all the student's senses. Since it has something to do with the manipulative skills. Thus if school agriculture is to play any useful role in the training of future farmers in the society, then such school programme in agriculture should aim at producing either skilled or semi-skilled youths that will impact positively on the society's food production efforts.

FOUR "V" MODEL AND AGRICULTURE

Aina (2004) explains the Four "V" Model and the relevance in Nigerian educational system.

The Four "V" Model originally put forth by Grace (1999) has been remodified to explain how to build ethical orientation leadership and attitude between the government and the governed including youths and students in all areas of human endeavours including agriculture. The "Vs" stand for Values, Vision, Voice and Virtues.

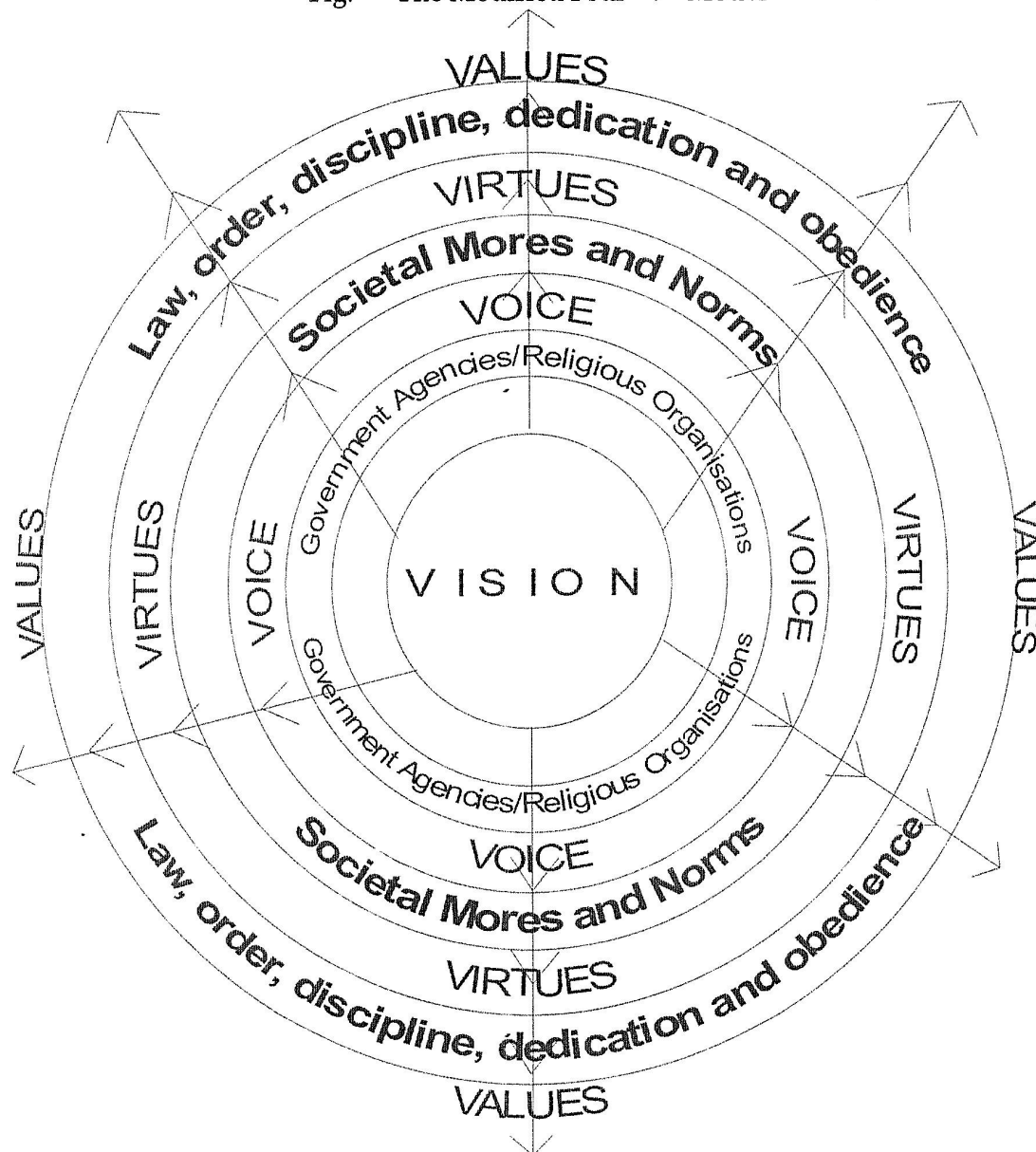
Value: deals with what is considered clean, good, right as against what is evil, bad, wrong etc. It explains in totality the premium placed on an action – the need for us as a nation to feed ourselves.

Vision: A long term plan on a future programme which will bring a purposeful change and impact positively on the lives of people in an area. It is time bound.

Voice: A way of giving proper mobilisation and orientation to people on a programme that will be of immense benefits and also the dissemination of same to the target audience. May be likened to government efforts in areas of OFN, BLP, FEAP, NEEDS, SEEDS, NAPEP etc to women, youths, farmers etc.

Virtue: It is the good everyone in the society and the society itself stands for. It is driven by sincerity of purpose and truth. It is the totality of the norms and mores in the society which should help shape and polish our various ways of life in relation to productive ventures in farm activities – poultry production, parables crop production, vegetable production, fish production etc.

Fig. The Modified Four "V" Model



Alademerin (2006).

In relating the model to agriculture, the ultimate is the value of agriculture to the larger society – in areas of provision of food, shelter, employment opportunities, domestic and industrial raw materials, livestock feeds etc. The linkage between the Four "V" is the force of mobilisation of the entire citizenry. The process of mobilisation at each stage will focus on ways and means of sensitizing Nigeria's labour force (including youths) to generate

greater productivity so as to ensure economic recovery and self reliance. Gana (1987) once asserted:

"We are convinced that the way forward is through effective and popular mobilisation of Nigeria's productive forces. If we succeed in mobilising the creative energies of our people for greater production, we would have laid a solid

foundation for economic recovery. The missing link has been effective mechanism for mobilising our labour force to transform our abundant natural resources into goods and services”.

The vision explains a long term government agricultural programmes (ADP, DRFFI, BLP, NAPEP etc) that will ultimately be of immense benefit to the society. Through government agencies, religious bodies, NGOs etc, the benefits inherent in the programmes are passed onto the society through various media.

In maximising the benefits, laws, discipline, dedication, obedience etc regarding the mode of operations of the programmes are spelt out to avoid one running foul of the guiding principles. The values got are not immediate as they take years or even decades to manifest in societies.

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