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COMMON GROUND

# Youth Organisation Activities in Complementing the Improvement and Effective Use of Classroom Instruction in Agriculture in Nigerian Schools

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*Abstract: Two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. Questionnaire was used to elicit relevant information from the respondents-school principals, agricultural science teachers and the students. Creating the awareness and interests of youths in agriculture cannot be an overnight and an instant affair. They must be integral parts of the day to day upbringing of our youths right from their schooling days through active participation in youth programmes and events that have much relevance to agriculture. These will ultimately broaden their understanding of the nature and scope of agriculture in and out of classroom situations. Since our daily lives revolve agriculture in totality, efforts should be made to orientate our youths[in and out of school environments] to appreciate agriculture as a life supporting engine. This study investigated youth organization activities in complementing the improvement and effective use of classroom instruction in Agriculture in Nigerian schools. Two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. Questionnaire was used to collect relevant information from 15 school principals, 34 agricultural science teachers and 228 agricultural science students randomly selected from a total population of the respondents in Ogun State, South-Western Nigeria. Mean, standard deviation and t-test were used for the analysis. Recommendations made based on the findings of the study include the engagements of the youths more in areas of crop production and livestock production, regular field trips and visits to agricultural shows among others.*

Keywords: Orientate, Totality, School Environments, Field Trips

## Introduction

THE YOUTHS CONSTITUTE the bulk of every nation's labour force. In the various Spheres of the National development, education, productive agriculture, military, transport, communication, construction. etc. For any Nation to pride itself as truly independent, it must be able to feed its teeming population and contribute significantly in the agricultural sectors. It then becomes imperative for the youths to participate in all agricultural programmes right from their schooling days in salvaging the economy of the nation through productive agriculture. Remove agriculture from the earth and there will be no man. This stems from the fact that the primary aim of all agricultural activities is to provide food, clothing and shelter through the products of soil and livestock. Thus agriculture is fundamental to life. Agricultural education programmes in different countries differ in curriculum, course content, and the duration and methods of imparting theoretical and practical skills. This means that the emphasis which a country places on vocational agriculture in schools will be determined by the extent to which her economy depends on agriculture.

Instructions in vocational agriculture for farming could include meaningful classroom experiences, supervised farming programmes of the students, school sponsored youth organizations like Young Farmers Club, Fortune Farmers, Frontline Farmers etc. These instructions provide innumerable opportunities for youths and even older adult farmers to study and discuss the problems related to farming programmes and farm living. Other advantages include:

- Learning of successful tips in farming and skills development.
- The opportunity to earn a living while still at school.
- Developing interest in farming related areas.
- Positive effect on other youths in the community
- Continuous and sustained interest in agriculture later in life. Alademerin (1996).

Making students more employable or more successful is an important objective of the instructional programme of school agriculture. In addition too, the youth organizations are considered as integral parts of the total instructional programme and are intra¬curricular. It is through this approach of dynamic agricultural extension services in our secondary schools that the present situation of agriculture in the country can be readdressed.

It is an established fact that agriculture helps to relate the educational system of a particular country to its needs, and these will further enable only practical men and women who are either employable by


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themselves or by others to be produced for the much needed overall development of the society.

Stein (1996) emphasized that youths of today have immediate and long term benefits as a result of regular training which will enhance their productivity, develop their skills and attitude which on the long run enable them to play active roles in the society. The classroom instruction should start as early as possible since desirable attitudes and appreciation of agricultural concepts are best taught during the receptive and malleable school age.

Giving early knowledge in agricultural practices to children of school age is a sure way to arouse their interest and develop their consciousness towards agriculture permanently. Such knowledge will involve basic means through which the Natural World around us will be best understood.

In addition to the early knowledge which children require, they also need wisdom. According to Bierly et al (2000), wisdom relates to the ability to effectively choose and apply the appropriate knowledge in a given situation". It is an important human capacity which gives direction to all our actions and inactions. The above are features in societies where youth development is given priority and the deserved attention. In Nigeria, youth development have curriculum planning and implementation.

Numerous problems militate against the realization of these and they include improper curriculum planning, inadequate manpower, poor attitude to agriculture, lack of capital, political and social problems, poor extension services and delivery to the grassroots etc. In tackling the situation, several state governments in Nigeria have taken positive steps since mid80s to reverse the situation through various school agricultural programmes – School to Land, Mobilization of Secondary Schools for Agriculture and Industry etc. On the national level, it has been one programme after the other to encourage youths in taking up farming as a profession. A well organized youth programme in agriculture from schools is also capable of establishing good community-school relationship which in turn will reflect on the teaching and learning of agriculture in our schools. Communities see young people as they work or see the work that the young people accomplish. These create positive feeling in the community's young people in a time when vandalism, drug addiction and a lack of respect for elders are so prevalent among the youths today.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate Youth organization activities in complementing the improvement and effective use of classroom instructions in agriculture in Nigerian schools.

## Research Questions

1. What are Youth organization activities in Nigerian schools?
2. How do Youth organizations and activities complement the improvement and effective use of classroom instructions in agriculture in Nigerian schools?

## Research Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of agricultural science teachers and agricultural science students on the youth organization activities in complementing the improvement and effective use of classroom instructions in agriculture in Nigerian schools.

## Research Methods

The study adopted a survey research design and it covered Ogun State in SouthWestern Nigeria. The population was made up of school principals, agricultural science teachers and agricultural science students in the Senior Secondary Schools of the State. Cluster sampling and stratified random sampling techniques were employed for the principals, agricultural science teachers and the agricultural science students. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire and it was responded to by the school principals, agricultural science teachers and agricultural science students. The instrument was given face and content validation by three (3) experts in agricultural education.

The Cronbach Alpha Reliability method was used to test the reliability and internal consistency and a result of 78.51 was got. Data were analyzed with mean, percentages, standard deviation and t test at 0.05 level of significance.

## Presentation and Analysis of Data

**Table 1: Return Rate of Questionnaire**

| No. Given | No. Returned | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Principals (22) | 15 | 68.20 |
| Agricultural science teachers (50) | 34 | 68.20 |
| Agricultural science students (280) | 238 | 85.00 |

**Table 2: Existence of Youth Activities in Schools**

| Respondents | Existence of Youth | Percentage of |
|---|---|---|
| | Organisation Activities in Schools | Responses (%) |
| Principals | 15 (Yes) | 100% |
| Total Number = 15 | 0 (No) | 0% |
| Agricultural science teachers | 30 (Yes) | 88.23% |
| Total Number = 34 | 4 (No) | 11.76% |
| Agricultural science students | 190 (Yes) | 83.33% |
| Total Number = 228 | 38 (No) | 16.66% |

## Research Question 1

What are Youth organization Activities in Schools?

**Table 3: Youth Activities in Schools**

| Respondents | Membership | | Order of Preference of Activities | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Visits & Excursion | Recreational Activities | Community Projects | Vegetable Production | Animal Production | Arable Crop Production |
| Principals | 10 (151200) | 13 | 2 | | | | |
| Total No. = 15 | 5 (201250) | | | | | | |
| Agric. | 25 (151200) | 31 | 3 | | | | |
| Science | 4 (51100) | | | | | | |
| Teachers | 5 (10115) | | | | | | |
| Total No. = 34 | | | | | | | |
| Agric. Science Students Total No.=228 | 150 (151200) 56 (201250) 22 (51100) | 185 | 31 | 4 | 8 | | |

## Research Question 2

How do Youth organizations and activities complement the improvement and effective use of classroom instructions in agriculture in Nigerian schools?

**Table 4: Youth Activities in Complementing Improvement and Effective Use of Classroom Instruction in Agriculture**

| S/N | Youth Activities | X1 Mean of Principals | SD1 | X2 Mean of Agric. Trs. | SD2 | X3 Mean of Agric. Stdts. | SD3 | Grand Mean | Grand SD | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Individual and group work on farming activities like vegetable gardening, poultry production, rabbit keeping, goat keeping etc | 3.66 | 0.48 | 3.61 | 0.73 | 2.71 | 1.07 | 3.32 | 0.76 | Agree |
| 2. | Learning by doing activities which seriously complement classroom theories with practicals | 3.60 | 0.50 | 3.44 | 0.56 | 3.19 | 0.93 | 3.41 | 0.66 | Agree |
| 3. | Teaching students how to perform skills and development of farming activities. | 3.66 | 0.61 | 3.52 | 0.66 | 2.89 | 1.02 | 3.35 | 0.76 | Agree |
| 4. | Creating a forum through practicals for good and cordial interaction among everyone. | 2.93 | 0.79 | 3.47 | 0.74 | 3.34 | 1.23 | 3.24 | 0.92 | Agree |
| 5. | Encouraging field trips, excursions, seminars and agric. shows to concretize knowledge. | 3.46 | 0.63 | 3.44 | 0.66 | 3.01 | 0.97 | 3.30 | 0.75 | Agree |
| 6. | Incorporating local crafts work, food processing, preservation, etc with classwork to further complement theories. | 3.06 | 1.02 | 3.29 | 0.75 | 2.23 | 1.10 | 2.85 | 0.95 | Disagree |
| 7. | Encouraging technological and engineering designs on simple farm tools, cages, feeding and watering troughs, millers, shellers. | 3.66 | 0.81 | 3.55 | 0.70 | 2.89 | 0.98 | 3.36 | 0.83 | Agree |
| 8. | Setting a day in the week as service, industry and technology towards skills in agriculture. | 3.20 | 0.86 | 2.91 | 0.90 | 3.14 | 0.93 | 3.08 | 0.89 | Agree |
| 9. | Adapting instructions, materials to classroom needs to ease understanding of concepts. | 3.40 | 0.63 | 3.76 | 0.43 | 3.23 | 0.94 | 3.46 | 0.66 | Agree |
| 10. | Making the classroom a 'nonthreatening' environment for students and teachers to interact. | 2.93 | 1.16 | 3.29 | 0.75 | 2.99 | 0.99 | 3.07 | 0.96 | Agree |

The remarks above are based on grand mean and a cutoff point of 3.00 on a four point scale. Table 4 clearly shows that the three groups of respondents agreed with all the items except item 6 as ways by which youth activities could help in the improvement of classroom instructions for effective teaching and learning of agricultural science in senior secondary schools in Ogun State. The principals and agricultural science teachers agreed in their respective group means but the agricultural science students disagreed that the youth activities could improve classroom instruction by incorporating local crafts work, food processing, preservation, etc with class work to further complement theories.

## Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of agricultural science teachers and agricultural science students on the roles of youth activities in improvement and effective use of classroom instruction in agriculture.

**Table 5: T-test of Youth Activities in Complementing the Improvement and Effective Use of Classroom Instruction in Agriculture**

| S/N | Youth Activities | X2 Mean of Agric. Trs. | SD1 | X3 Mean of Agric. Stdts. | SD2 | t-ratio | t-crit. T-cal | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Individual and group work on farming activities like vegetable gardening, poultry production, rabbit keeping, goat keeping etc | 3.61 | 0.73 | 2.71 | 1.07 | 1.645 | 5.60 | Reject Ho |
| 2. | Learning by doing activities which seriously complement classroom theories with practicals | 3.44 | 0.56 | 3.19 | 0.93 | 1.645 | 1.74 | Reject Ho |
| 3. | Teaching students how to perform skills and development of farming activities. | 3.52 | 0.66 | 2.89 | 1.02 | 1.645 | 4.08 | Reject Ho |
| 4. | Creating a forum through practicals for good and cordial interaction among everyone. | 3.47 | 0.74 | 3.34 | 1.23 | 1.645 | 0.80 | Accept Ho |
| 5. | Encouraging field trips, excursions, seminars and agric. shows to concretize knowledge. | 3.44 | 0.66 | 3.01 | 0.97 | 1.645 | 2.80 | Reject Ho |
| 6. | Incorporating local crafts work, food processing, preservation, etc with class work to further complement theories. | 3.29 | 0.75 | 2.23 | 1.10 | 1.645 | 6.50 | Reject Ho |
| 7. | Encouraging technological and engineering designs on simple farm tools, cages, feeding and watering troughs, millers, shellers. | 3.55 | 0.70 | 2.89 | 0.98 | 1.645 | 4.18 | Reject Ho |
| 8. | Setting a day in the week as service, industry and technology towards skills in agriculture. | 2.91 | 0.90 | 3.14 | 0.93 | 1.645 | 1.32 | Accept Ho |
| 9. | Adapting instructions, materials to classroom needs to ease understanding of concepts. | 3.76 | 0.43 | 3.23 | 0.94 | 1.465 | 4.10 | Reject Ho |
| 10. | Making the classroom a 'nonthreatening' environment for students and teachers to interact. | 3.29 | 0.75 | 2.99 | 0.99 | 1.645 | 1.85 | Reject Ho |

The null hypothesis for the items on Table 5 was tested using the ttest at P<0.5 and 260 degree of freedom. The calculated tvalue for 2 of the items i.e. 4 and 8 (0.80 and 1.32) were less than the critical values and this indicated that there was significant difference in the mean rating of the two groups of respondents (i.e. agricultural science teachers and the students) on the 2 items, while there were no significant difference in the mean rating of respondents in the other 8 items. The null hypothesis was rejected for all the 8 items but upheld for only remaining 2 of the items.

## Summary of Findings

The major findings were that most schools are not making maximum use of youth activities because of lack of enough professionally qualified teachers, and the club is functioning more in offfarm areas unlike in more productive areas in most of the sampled schools. The organisation could be effectively utilized to expose the members i.e. students to good teaching aids and materials, improve their skills, attitudes, abilities etc and good mastery of agricultural science during visits, excursions, seminars, agricultural shows, field trips etc if effectively utilized. The efficiency of youth activities as a valuable tool for school instruction will only be realized if principals, agricultural science teachers and agricultural science students are in harmony with one another and also, the immediate community should be able to allow the schools exist and operate in a conducive atmosphere and should offer regular assistance in form

of human and material resources whenever the need arises.

## Educational Implications and Inherrent Values

Various youth organization activities are veritable tools in raising the awareness and consciousness of the youths to contribute their own quota in all spheres of National development even while still at school and afterwards. Since the youths constitute the bulk of the work force in every Nation, the inherrent attributes must be fully utilized maximally for the good of themselves, their immediate societies and the Nation at large. Contributions of the youths in the larger societies in various endeavours social, economics, political, entertainment and sports etc. take their roots from the earlier engagements of the youths while schooling.

Getting the youths to be fully involved in the YFC pogrammes will no doubt give the youths the necessary impetus and encouragements to go into the productive areas of agriculture upon graduation. The YFC serves as an avenue to further mobilize the interest of the youths in agro allied fields and also provides an array of sources of information on agro allied fields. Concepts can now be taught and explained in concise terms as the youth activities provide array of opportunities to go on field trips and excursions, to be directly engaged in some farm activities, to be physically trained in some farm operations etc.The youth activities expose the students to first hand knowledge and rudiments in agriculture which the teacher may not be able to fully explain under a classroom situation. Explaining some concepts become less cumbersome on the part of the teacher. Through this medium, a substantial amount of government spendings on enlightenment and orientation of the populace (mainly youths) towards productive agriculture as it is the case with some local programmes on poverty alleviation in Nigeria will be drastically reduced. The gradual development of the interest of the youths while still at school will invariably translate into earning a living from agricultural occupations which in future may become a permanent feature in their lives. This will reduce level of unemployment and the incidence of social vices among the youths – violence, crimes, drug abuse, sex abuse, hostage taking internet scan, robbery etc. A society free from all these vices may invariably pride itself as sane and truly independent.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- The youth activities should be made more productive in areas of arable crops production like maize, rice, beans, vegetables and livestock rearing like goats, sheep and poultry birds. The present situation in which most sampled schools engage in areas of recreational activities, community projects and visits should be revised and improved upon.
- The implementation of the youth development programmes at the National, State and LG. areas of the country should be clearly spelt out and made more measurable in agricultural related areas. This will make it mandatory for every State in the country to have a well defined youth development programmes in agriculture and incorporate these into the schools curriculum.
- The youth activities should be used as a more meaningful rallying point for youths through field trips, excursions, visits, seminars, agricultural shows etc so that they can be more motivated on the subject and have more awareness and better perception and good image of agricultural science.
- The teaching of agricultural science in senior secondary schools should be with respective teaching aids and instructional materials and the idea of teaching in abstractions should be discourage. This will further arouse their interest in the subject.
- Regular field trips and the teaching of modern methods of agricultural practices to the students should be intensified with the believe that through the students, there will be a multiplier effects on the dissemination of modern agricultural practices on their parents and the larger farming family in the communities. This will also complement government extension services at a micro level.

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## About the Author

*Dr. Edwards A. Alademerin*

Almost 12 years out of 25 years of teaching and lecturing, I have been involved in skills training programme for students in tertiary institution. Apart from my normal primary assignments of lecturing Agricultural Education courses, I also coordinated the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) and Centre for Research and Development in Primary Education (CERDEP). SIWES is a skill training programme designed to expose and prepare the students for the industrial working situation they are likely to meet after graduation. It is a compulsory part of the programme towards acquisition of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). I have been involved in the retraining exercises and workshops for Senior Extension Officers and Community Development Officers at the Lagos State Local Government Service Commission, Ikeja-Lagos for over six years. My Doctoral research work between 1998 – 2001 was in the area of Programme Impacts Evaluation on Cassava research and development in Southern Nigeria. The research exposed me to the inherent attributes of Cassava as a Poverty Alleviation crop in the tropical world. The study also equipped us with all the necessary skills and rudiments required in the successful planning in the areas of poverty alleviation programme and initiatives on the poor and the marginalized. I have no doubt that the experiences I have gained during the doctoral field work have prepared me for better challenges ahead in adequate service delivery to mankind.Presently i lecture agriculture courses in my University. My previous and present positions have sharpened my horizons as they prepare me for greater tasks and challenges ahead in life.