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## The Problems and Prospects of Agricultural Education in Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

*The problems and prospects of agricultural education in Nigeria was examined. The contribution of agriculture before and advent of oil boom, with theoretical exposition of agricultural education and its objectives were also examined. The fundamental and emerging global problems of agricultural education as well as the prospects were also dealt with. Recommendations which include restructuring the minds of the Nigerian youths through education, refocusing agricultural education's curriculum and methodology in line with the ethics of production and training for self reliance and adjusting to employment needs and entrepreneurship were made. Others include sponsoring agricultural educators for seminars, conferences and exhibitions at the appropriate times, creating a strong institutional framework by clearly bringing theoretical ideals to practical realities and perceiving agricultural education as a global issue were recommended.*

Agriculture has played a crucial role in the Nigeria's economy despite the drift towards the oil sector. Despite the drift, agriculture contributes 42 percent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) compared to 15-18 percent of the total oil's contribution which is also unstable since it fluctuates with world market places (Kolawole and Ojo, 2007). Despite the fact that the government generates 95 percent of the revenue from oil, Abdullahi (2005) opined that the economy is based on the contributors to the GDP and the major contributor is agriculture. Agriculture accounts for about 70 percent of the employment, 90 percent of the country's food production as well as for the production of raw materials for agro-allied industries and improvement of the income

and standard of living of the majority of the citizens who are farmers (Ajani,2006).The contribution of the agricultural sector to the development of the Nigeria's economy will be highly attained through analyzing the problems and prospects of Agricultural Education in Nigeria.

### **Meaning of Agricultural Education**

Agricultural Education is a process of imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes in agriculture to a learner at any level. It gives the learner a sound academic knowledge, skills and ample opportunity to apply this knowledge. According to Tibi (1991), Agricultural Education is an education employed in training learner in the basic art of farming combined with the science of teaching agriculture. Olaitan (1989), opined that agricultural education is a vital developmental process which is directly related to the effectiveness of trained man power.

### **Objectives of Agricultural Education**

The major objectives of agricultural education in Nigeria are:

1. To provide the youth with sound knowledge of the basic principles and techniques of agriculture and the motivation with which they can translate this knowledge into real improvement in agricultural productivity.
2. To preserve those aspects of culture which are in line with modern farming methods while changing those which are obsolete with regards to taking into consideration, the importance of tradition and customs within the rural community.
3. To provide the farmer with the knowledge upon which to base the rural community.
4. To help the rural farmers develop an understanding of the inter-relationships of urban and rural life.
5. To provide training to specialist in agricultural occupations such as livestock, horticulture, food storage and processing as well as insurance and financing.
6. To provide counseling on agricultural occupations and means of preparing for them.
7. To produce adequate trained personnel involved in extension services for farmers, translating research findings into field trials and then into commercial applications(Minimum Standard for NCE Teachers, 2008).

To achieve the above listed objectives which are aimed at the development of functional agriculture and acquisition of knowledge for a sustainable increase in agricultural production, there is need to assess the problems and prospects of agricultural education in Nigeria.

## **Problems and Prospects of Agricultural Education in Nigeria**

The problems of agricultural education can be viewed from two perspectives-namely the fundamental problems and the emerging global problems.

### **1. Fundamental Problems of Agricultural Education in Nigeria**

The fundamental problems affecting agricultural education in Nigeria are:

#### **a) The Pre-tertiary Level.**

In Nigeria, teachers who teach Agricultural Science in most secondary schools are trained in agriculture without any background in education or post-graduate training in education. Agricultural topics are taught as biology in schools without any due translation to practical use for production. This discourages favorable attitudes of the youths who should be encouraged to take up farming as their occupation as Aghimen and Nosa, (2001) opined that the major aim of Agricultural Education for the youth in school is to expose them to various occupations in agriculture and prepare them for such occupations.

#### **b) Lack of Proper Curriculum Development.**

In the development of the agricultural sector in Nigeria, the relevance of agricultural education curricular cannot be ignored. Agricultural education has not been given an appropriate place in Nigeria school curriculum. Even though Nigerian tertiary institutions are believed to well armed with adequate curricula and technical know-how to teach Agricultural Science. However, bulk of what is taught in schools is imported from developed countries (Obiaga, 1997). There is a breakdown in the link between what is taught, agricultural labour market and the needs of the farmers hence Ibrahim (2012) observed that the education of agricultural graduates is not commercial sector's need oriented.

#### **c) Lack of Good Quality Teachers**

Teacher quality has a strong bearing on societal survival since the quality of education in any society depends on the quality of its teachers. In any nation, agricultural development depend to a large extend, on the quality of Agricultural Science teachers which is also dependent on their professional and pedagogical competence. However, there is no corresponding rebuilt of agricultural skills by Agricultural Educators to meet with the rapid rate of changing world of production today as well as rapid changes in both scientific and technical knowledge (Ogunride, 1992).

**d) Poor Method of Instruction**

Demonstration, project, questioning, fieldtrip, discussion, assignment and Lecture method are the teaching methods employed in teaching agriculture. However, lecture-based method of instruction is mostly employed in teaching (Asuquo, 2011).Lecture method is a teaching technique in which a more knowledgeable person (the teacher) supplies information and ideas to the less knowledgeable person (the student). In this teaching method, the teacher dominates the proceedings of the class leaving the students with very little chance for contribution. This method is teacher centered. Most times, this method is devoid of detailed demonstration and eliminates the effective development of competence. Competency-based education remains appropriate for teaching of agriculture and competent teachers are the link between curriculum and the learner (Egun, 2001)

**e) Poor Teacher's Motivation**

Due to little or no motivation, poor supply of teaching materials, inadequate educational resources, infrastructural facilities and organizational structure of agricultural learning, there is poor job satisfaction on the part of the teacher. This creates a weak relationship between schools and the world of work, poor quality agricultural educational programmes and poor agricultural teacher preparation programmes,

**f) Lack of Consistent Educational Policies**

The poor standard of education in Nigeria today resulted from inconsistent educational policies by those in government. The administration of agriculture in Nigeria is the responsibility of Ministry of Agriculture and its agencies. However, the personnels whose appointments were on political basis are untrained and therefore, not capable of translating theoretical ideals into practical reality. According to Igbuzor (2006) educational policy is the statement of intentions of the government and the envisaged means of achieving those aspects of the national objectives that rely on the use of education as a tool.

**g) Inadequate Fund**

There is no adequate fund for the provision of conducive and enabling environment to facilitate the effective teaching and learning process as well as research. Tertiary institutions are statutorily expected to be engaged in research to enrich the process of societal development and not to be engaged in teaching only (Ebong,2008) This expectations are not adequately met due to inadequate fund as research in agriculture requires huge investments and capital which individuals cannot cope. The bureaucratic delay in the release of fund has also affected research effort.

## **2. The Emerging Global Problems**

The emerging global problems focuses on two major aspects related to the changing world .This include the issue of pace of technology change and environmental factor.

### **a) The Pace of Technological Change.**

The pace of change is much faster today compared to the past, especially in the field of agricultural innovations. The extent of this scientific advances allows shorter periods for assimilation (Maguire,2000). Globally, the aspect of food production process which includes processing, storage and marketing has become increasingly important to agricultural producers to meet the high demands of the changing world and as such, Agricultural Education must take new subject areas and their socio-economic consequence into consideration.

### **b) Environmental Factors**

Environmental factors are concerned with the issues of climate change which results from global warming. The causes, impacts on agricultural production and ways of mitigating effects of climate change on agricultural production. The problems of degradation, desertification and ways of solving the problems as Maguire (2000) stated that with so many aspects of development, agricultural education in Africa now faces a perplexing and rapid change in the environment. Therefore, there is the need for agricultural training institutions to adjust to the realities of change as seen in today's world.

### **c) Changing Pattern of Job Opportunities**

In Nigeria, agricultural education has suffered from the too much academic orientation, when the need is for a greater employment orientation. The nature of workplace is changing. Today, the workplace asks for people with higher professional qualification and skills. In today's labor market, a work force which is able to adapt itself to new areas of real life situations is needed than one that is mainly theoretical based and problem -solving .

## **The Prospect of Agricultural Education in Nigeria**

For the economy of Nigeria to be listed as one of the leading economies, increase in food production is important, income diversification is important, job creation is also important. Agricultural education offers all these possibilities.

One of the cultural values, Nigeria Agricultural Education is expected to transmit is the learning, training and practice of agriculture(Egun,2010). It is transformation of the understanding and practice of farming to meet the changing world of the time. This

process of transformation in the following areas has huge prospects for the agricultural sector.

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**i) Increased Food Production**

Agricultural Education is now targeted towards the rural farmers who form the real food and raw material producers in the country comprising of 95 percent of the domestically marketed and consumer food and 2.4 percent export (Ezeh, 1999). A well structured system of Agricultural Education interpretes both vigorous expansion and adaptation to the actual farmer's needs especially in the following areas:

- a. Farmers being motivated by been given incentives.
- b. Gradual move of subsistence farmers to mechanized farmers, train them and give them subsidy.
- c. The move from rain fed agriculture to irrigation farming for a sustainable massive production.
- d. Mass Agricultural Education of the farmers on the techniques of conservation as well as agro- ecological agriculture.
- e. The training and re-training of extension farmers on improved agricultural practices.
- f. Serious utilization of research findings.
- g. Meeting the needs mentioned above ensures continual increase in food production thereby coping with the national food needs.

**ii) Income Diversification**

Areas of agriculture can be broadly subdivided into its various subsectors which include livestock production, fishery, crop production and forestry (Darma, 2007). Current curricula of bee keeping, snail farming, grass cutter farming, the areas of agro-diversity, environmental aspects and the various type of agricultural entrepreneurship will pave way for income generation as well as diversification.

**iii) Increased Job creation**

Nigeria with a population of 140 million (2006 Census), about 70 percent of Nigerians are employed in the agricultural sector (Darma, 2007). With the fast growing population in Nigeria and with new areas like beekeeping, snail farming, grass cutter farming, agro-diversity conservation and environmental aspects incorporated into agricultural education curricula, a vast job opportunities exists for graduates of agriculture.

Other areas for job opportunities also include the area of processing, storage and marketing of agricultural produce, land resource development as well as land administration thereby reducing the rate of unemployment in the country.

Agriculture, when rightly practiced and accorded its rightful place, can be a major driver of growth and development for Nigeria.

## **Conclusion**

For the prospects of agricultural education listed above to be met, agricultural education must be stimulated to adopt and respond to the realities of rural society, bring theoretical ideals to practical realities and also ensure a sustainable agricultural production. For all these to be achieved, there is need to assess the problems of Agricultural Education in Nigeria, bearing in mind the stated problems and recommendations made below.

## **Recommendations**

Having assessed the problems and prospects of Agricultural Education in Nigeria, the writer is of the opinion that such problems can be resolved if the following recommendations are considered for implementation.

1. There should be a restructuring of the minds of the Nigerian youths through education for a purposeful and determined efforts aimed at agricultural development. Identifying the problems of Agricultural Education in the light of the development of agriculture in Nigeria is the starting point of the restructuring process.
2. Agricultural Science students should have the ability to communicate, work in teams and adapt to changes. This is to enable them to be innovative, creative and be familiar with the new technology.
3. Agricultural education's curriculum and methodology should be refocused in Nigeria. This involves reformation and restructuring of agricultural education in line with the ethics of production and training for self-reliance.
4. Agricultural Science teaching should be adjusted to employment needs and entrepreneurship. This entails relationship with the employment market, local needs, community participation and development objectives
5. Agricultural Educators should be sponsored for seminars, conferences and agricultural exhibitions at the appropriate times. This will motivate them.
6. There should be a relatively strong institutional framework for promoting agricultural development. This will stimulate Agricultural Education by clearly bringing theoretical ideals to practical realities.
7. Government should increase funding for the agricultural sector. Various agencies should donate laboratory facilities, farm tools and equipment to both secondary schools and tertiary institutions offering agriculture.
8. Agricultural education should be perceived as a global issue. This can be achieved by restructuring and reforming government policies, international co-operation and agricultural education institutions i.e. principles for developing strategy in support of agricultural education as well as training in secondary, intermediate and higher agricultural education level.

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