Farming Skills Development for Snail Production Business Among Agricultural Education Students in Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku – Rivers State

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Abstract

This study investigated farming skills development for snail production business among agricultural education students in Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku – Rivers State. To achieve this, two specific purpose, two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated. The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of 12 final year Nigeria Certificate in Education agricultural education students made up five males and seven females from F.C.E. (T.), Omoku during the 2021/2022 academic session. The study was anchored on experiential learning theory and the 3 stages model was utilized. Self-assessment checklist developed by the researcher was used to collect data from the participant at the end of the study. The reliability was ascertained using test-retest method. The correlation between the two administrations was computed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) and gave r value of 0.74. Data generated from the checklist were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions. Independent t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. All computations were done with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23.0. The findings revealed that both male and female agricultural education students opined that the practical snail farming skills development programme met their expectation because it addresses their needs for snail farming skills development. The finding also revealed that there is no significant difference in the rating of both gender. The finding also revealed that male and female agricultural education students in Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku opined that they excellent developed snail farming skills as results of exposure to practical snail farming exercises. The finding also revealed that there is no significant difference in the snail farming skills both gender developed due to participation in the practical snail farming programme. It was recommended among others that agricultural education farm instructors should design practical snail farming programme to ensure the students are engaged with learning activities relating to planning, pen construction exercises, snail feeding tasks, sterilization exercises in the farm, incubation tasks in the farm, hatching and harvesting exercises.

Keywords: Agricultural education, snail farming, experiential learning and skills development

Introduction

The agricultural sector is the oldest and the most promising source of employment for teeming citizens of most nations around the world. Taking this into consideration, the World Bank Report (2014) put agriculture as the main source of gainful employment, a source of basic food supply for teeming population of the world, and a regenerative source of foreign exchange earnings for many countries. The realization of these and other contributions of agriculture as well as its spillover effect on the continuous survival of man and nations made its knowledge and practices to be desired and promoted through the formal school system of many nations. Agricultural knowledge and practices as taught within formal school setups are either referred to as 'Agricultural Science' or 'Agricultural Education'. The latter which is the focus area of this study is mostly referred to as vocational agricultural education. Rufus (2021) defined vocational agricultural education as that aspect of education which in addition to general education equips its recipients with agricultural knowledge and skills for jobs in the agricultural sector of the economy.

Vocational agricultural education is mostly offered at the University under the Faculty of Education and at the Colleges of Education. It important to note that vocational agricultural education as offered in the Colleges of Education is expected to attain the following objectives among other:

- i. To prepare graduates with the right attitude to and knowledge/professional competence in vocational Agricultural.
- ii. To produce teachers who will be capable to motivating students to have interest in and aptitude for agriculture.
- iii. To equip the student teacher with adequate knowledge and ability to establish and manage a model farm effectively.
 (National Commission for Colleges of Education, NCCE, 2020)

The attainment of these laudable objectives required that vocational agricultural education should not be limited to theoretical knowledge but should involved intense practical in all aspects of agricultural practices. Makusidi, Lamidi and Bello (2017) noted students need to be provided with short and long term practical activities and project on crop production, vegetables and fruits production, livestock production, bee keeping and snailery in order to attain the objectives of developing competence for vocational agricultural practices and skills for establishing and managing model farm effectively as specified in the minimum standard for Colleges of Education. Similarly, Amadi and Nnodim (2018) noted agricultural education programme at the College level is required to gives instructions to students on crop production, livestock production and management, soil and water conservation and others aspects of agriculture in addition to pedagogical theories and skills. It is important to noted that exposing students to both theoretical and practical aspects of agriculture has the potential to provide balance education for building their capacity to be more effective, self-reliant, resourceful, and capable of teaching and practicing various aspects of agriculture.

One aspect of livestock production that students of vocational agricultural education are expected to learn before graduation is snail production. Snail production is an aspect of snail farming which according to Escargot world (2022) is also known as heliculture simply put it is the rearing of snails for human use. Snail farming is a very profitable business and requires small capital to startup (Nwankwo, 2021). Snail farming business is said to be profitable for many reasons which include that snail are edible source of protein, iron, calcium, vitamin A and other minerals, snail shell can

be used in gastronomy, cosmetics, food for reptiles, and can be used for various forms of decoration purposes (Escargot world, 2022).

Although snail farming is profitable for any student who ventures into it, skills are required to be able to effectively undertake this venture. According to Ogba and Ndem (2016), to effectively engage in land snail breeding and rearing students need to develop skills for pen construction, feeding skills, disease control skills, and routine management skills. Makusidi, *et al* (2017), reported that to venture into snail farming NCE vocational agricultural education students need to be assisted to develop planning skill, pen construction skills, sterilization skills, feeding skills, incubation skills, hatching and harvesting skills. Similarly, Ekezie (2019) reported the need for agricultural education graduating students who wants to go into snail farming business to develop hatchability skills, skills in pen construction, skills in snail feed preparation, accounting skills, strategic planning skills, communication skills and business management skills. Consequently, the expectation of stakeholders in agricultural education, poverty alleviation, employment generation and national development will be to see graduating students of this programme being equipped with these relevant skills in order to empower them to be self-employed in the case of lack of readymade jobs after graduation.

Many researchers have studied skills for snail farming needed by students and agricultural education graduating students. For instance, Ogba and Ndem (2016) conducted study to investigate skills needed by secondary school graduates for breeding and rearing of Giant African Land Snail (GALS) in Ebonyi State. Makusidi, Lamidi, and Bello (2017) investigated competencies required by Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) agricultural education graduates on snails farming. Ekezie (2019) conducted study on skills acquisition in snail farming: a panacea for entrepreneurship development of graduate youths in Rivers State, Nigeria. Onah, et al (2021) conducted investigation on entrepreneurial skills in snail production required by youths for wealth creation in Enugu State. Although, all these studies have identified several skills required of agricultural education students going into snail farming business, none of the studies have taken the step to assist the students develop the skills for snail farming using real life practice of snail farming, it is this gap in literature that the present study intends to fill.

Statement of Problem

Agricultural education students especially those from Colleges of Education as seen in the introductory part of this study are expected to be exposed to a wide range of agricultural activities in order to enable them develop professional competence in vocational agricultural and ability to establish and manage a model farm effectively. Unfortunately, the prevailing circumstances where the students are barely exposed to practical agricultural activities nor given the opportunity to learn through model farm would definitely hinder the attainment of the programme's laudable objectives. The effect of such bookish trained agricultural education graduates is seen in their lack of skills to practice agriculture especially as it relates to crop farming, fishing, snail rearing, food crop processing, rabbit farming, goat farming, landscaping/floriculture and agricultural mechanics amongst others which could earn them a living and add to the national Gross Domestic Product. Consequently, rather than taking up opportunity to start agricultural business that required small capital like snail farming graduates of the institution are seen joining the unemployed population of the State. These situations are disturbing and naturally call for efforts to bridge the existing gap by starting learning activities capable of assisting the graduating students to develop some form of skills in any aspects of agriculture that can be exploit for livelihood. It is this need that inspires the researcher to

Objectives

The main arm of the study is to investigate farming skills development for snail production business among agricultural education students in Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku – Rivers State. Specifically, the study seeks to ascertain:

- i. male and female agricultural education students' rating of practical snail farming skills development programme in terms of meeting their needs.
- ii. snail farming skills developed by male and female agricultural education students as a result of exposure to practical.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What is male and female agricultural education students' rating of practical snail farming skills development programme in terms of meeting their needs?
- ii. What are the snail farming skills developed by male and female agricultural education students as results of exposure to practical?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- 1. There is no significant difference in the rating of male and female agricultural education students' snail farming skills development programme in terms of meeting their need.
- 2. There is no significant difference in the snail farming skills developed by male and female agricultural education students as results of exposure to practical.

Theoretical Review

This study is guided by the following theory:

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) by David A. Kolb (1984)

David's (1984) experiential learning theory integrated the work of prominent 20th century theorists such as John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, Carl Jung and Carl Rogers who all made learning through experience as the main focus of their theories of human learning and development. Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) stated that knowledge is created through the transformation of experience(s). The theory is a dynamic view of learning based on a spiral learning cycle driven by the resolution of the dual dialectics of action/reflection and experience/abstraction. Kolb explained that experiential learning process involves a creative tension among dual dialectics of action/reflection and experience/abstraction that are responsive to contextual demands. Immediate or concrete experiences are the basis for action and reflection in the experiential learning process.

There are different types of experiential learning models educators can adapt to suit their purposes. These include 1- Stage model of EL, 2- Stages model of EL, 3- Stages model of EL and 4- Kolb's 4–Stages cycle Model of EL.

However, in this study, the 3-stages model of experiential learning will be adopted and used. This requires students to observe all the process of snail farming at stage 1, practice the skills performance procedures and note their challenges at stage 2, and brainstorm on the challenges with the train and re-practice at stage 3.

The above theory is significant to the present study because it supports the use of hands-on experience for the purpose of learning and developing skills for future endeavour. The theory also provides the model to be used in this study.

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Agricultural Education

According to United State Department of Education (2011), Agricultural Education focuses on exposing recipients to agriculture, natural resources, and land management with the aim to empower them for employment in the agricultural section. Ikehi, Ifeanyiese and Ugwuoke (2014) noted that the teaching and learning of Agricultural science and practices at the tertiary institution aims to equipped students with the principles of using scarce resources to produce crops and animals in order to feed the world's population and for other related uses. American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF, 2015) defined agricultural education as education designed to expose recipients to agriculture theory and practices, natural resources, and land management. AFBF noted that at higher education level, this form of education is concerned with preparing students for employment in the agricultural sector through exposure to curriculum which may cover areas such as horticulture, land management, turf grass management, agricultural science, small animal care, machine and shop classes, health and nutrition, livestock management, and biology. Amadi and Nnodim (2018) described agricultural education as one of the essential tools for equipping recipients with agricultural knowledge and skills through hands on experience in order to make them self-reliant in agricultural ventures such as crop production, livestock management, soil and water conservation and other aspects of agriculture.

Concept of Skills Development

Adam (2011) opined that skills development is used to describe a wider array of institution-based or collaborative methods that involve the use of learning activities to influence graduates' ability to be self-employed after graduation and earn better earnings. Okoro (2015) explained that skills development has to do with the processes used to facilitate the turning of a novice into an expert in the performance of certain tasks. In same vein, Amesi (2018) noted that the relevance of skills development can be summarized to include empowerment for: self-employment, diverse job prospects, employment generation, operative functions and crime reduction.

Methodology

In this study, descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. According to Ezekiel, Oguzor, Onyeukwu, Onwuchekwa and China (2017), descriptive survey research is the most appropriate when it comes to assessing opinion of respondents on the characteristics of certain phenomena in order to draw certain conclusions. This research design is deemed appropriate because it allows the researcher to collect data relevant to the study based on opinion of participants. This study was conducted in Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku in Rivers-West Senatorial Zone of Rivers State. Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku, Rivers State is one of the Colleges of Education established by Act No. 4. of 1986 of the Federal Government of Nigeria, Act No. 6 of 1993 as amended. The College was established to run courses leading to the award of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) on full and part-time basis. The College has a department of Agricultural Education in the School of Secondary Education (Vocational), hence making it a suitable for the study.

The population of this study consisted of 12 final year NCE Agricultural Education students in School of Secondary Education (Vocational) in Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku during 2021/2022 academic session. The entire population which is made up of 5 males and 7 females was used as the sample of the study because it is a manageable size. Therefore, no sampling technique was adopted for the study.

The instrument for data collection is a researcher's developed checklist titled "Students' Self-Assessment of Snail Farming Skills Development Programme Checklist (SSSFSDPC)". The instrument is divided into two sections. The first section assessed the practical snail farming programme meeting students' needs and the second section assessed the abilities students think they have developed as a results of exposure to the practical programme. The response options to section 1 are based on 4 points rating scale of Exceed Expectation (EE – 4points), Meet Expectation (ME – 3points), Approach Expectation (AE – 2points), and Does not Meet Expectation (DnME – 1point); while the response options for the section 2 are based 3 points rating scale of Exceelently Developed (ED – 3points), Somehow Developed (SD – 2 points), and Could not Develop (CnD – 1 point). The checklist was filled by the participants at the end of the training.

The construct validity of the SSSFSDPC was determined by an expert in Educational Measurement and Evaluation and two experts in Agricultural Education, all from Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku. There inputs of these experts were incorporated into the instruments before the final copy was produced for use.

The reliability of SSSFSDPC was ascertained using test-retest method. The test-retest method was used to test the measure of stability of the instrument. The test-retest was done in an interval of two weeks using group of 10 NCE II agricultural education during 2022/2023 academic session who are not part of the study. The correlation between the two administrations was computed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) and gave r value of 0.74.

Research Procedures

The researcher obtained permission from Agricultural Education head of department to expose the NCE III students to practical snail farming. The researcher and the students jointly inspected the department farm to locate a space for the snail farming. The researcher purchased all necessary materials for the construction of snail farming pen with few of the students. The researcher and the students jointly constructed the pen and make it ready for snail farming. The researcher in the company of few students purchased the snails to be breed. The researcher demonstrated to the students how the snails are placed in the pen. The researcher demonstrated to the students how to feed the snails and provide water for three weeks. At the end of six weeks of training, the students were required to set up a new pen and start the training of snails for another six weeks. At the end of the six weeks, students were required to make their observations and fill the checklist.

Data generated from the checklist were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions. Independent t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. All computations were done with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23.0.

Results

Research Question 1: What is male and female agricultural education students' rating of practical snail farming skills development programme in terms of meeting their needs?

Table 1:Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation of Male and Female Agricultural
Education Students' Rating of Practical Snail Farming Skills Development
Programme

IIARD – International Institute of Academic Research and Development

		Male				Female (n = 07)			
S/N	Items	Mean	(n = 05) Std. Deviatio n	Decision	Mean	Std. Deviatio n	Decision		
1	Snail farming planning exposure	3.00	0.00	ME	2.00	0.00	AE		
2	Pen construction exercises	2.50	0.00	ME	3.00	0.00	ME		
3	Snail feeding tasks	2.52	0.50	ME	2.50	0.51	ME		
4	Sterilization exercises in the farm	2.59	0.49	ME	2.50	0.51	ME		
5	Incubation tasks in the farm	2.50	0.50	ME	2.50	0.51	ME		
6	Hatching and harvesting exercises	2.75	0.61	ME	2.63	0.73	ME		
	Cluster mean and standard deviation	2.64	0.35	ME	2.52	0.38	HE		

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 revealed that male and female agricultural education students rated pen construction exercises, snail feeding tasks, sterilization exercises in the farm, incubation tasks in the farm, hatching and harvesting exercises in the farm they learnt practically to have met their expectation with mean scores of 2.50, 3.00, 2.52, 2.50, 2.59, 2.50, 2.50, 2.50, 2.75, 2.63 and standard deviation scores of 0.00, 0.00, 0.50, 0.51, 0.49, 0.51, 0.50, 0.51, 0.61, and 0.73 respectively. However, while the male students opined that snail farming planning exposure met their expectation with mean score of 3.00 and standard deviation score of 0.00, their female counterparts opined that same exposure approached their expectation with mean score of 2.64, 2.52 and standard deviation score of 0.35 and 0.38 are considered, it can be concluded that both male and female agricultural education students in Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku used for this study opined that the practical snail farming skills development.

Research Question 2: What are the snail farming skills developed by male and female agricultural education students as results of exposure to practical?

	Developed by Male and Fema	le Agricu	ltural Edu	ication Stu	dents		
			Male		F	emale (n =	: 07)
			$(\mathbf{n}=05)$)			
S/N	Items	Mean	Std.	Decision	Mean	Std.	Decision
			Deviatio			Deviatio	
			n			n	
7	Snail farm planning skills	2.55	0.64	ED	2.90	0.96	ED
8	Pen construction skills	2.66	0.78	ED	2.65	0.77	ED
9	Snail feeding skills	2.79	0.87	ED	2.70	0.79	ED
10	Sterilization skills	2.65	0.71	ED	2.52	0.32	ED
11	Incubation skills	2.55	0.62	ED	3.00	0.00	ED
12	Hatching and harvesting skills	2.63	0.51	ED	2.64	0.73	ED

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Cluster mean and standard2.640.69ED2.740.60ED							
1 • 4•	Cluster mean and standard	2.64	0.69	ED	2.74	0.60	ED
deviation	deviation						

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 revealed that male and female agricultural education students opined that they excellently developed snail farm planning skills, pen construction skills, snail feeding skills, sterilization skills, incubation skills and hatching and harvesting skills with mean score of 2.55, 2.90, 2.66, 2.65, 2.79, 2.70, 2.65, 2.52, 2.55, 3.00, 2.63, 2.64 and standard deviation scores of 0.64, 0.96, 0.78, 0.77, 0.87, 0.79, 0.71, 0.32, 0.62, 0.00, 0.51 and 0.73 respectively. Similarly, when the cluster mean scores of 2.64, 2.74 and standard deviation scores of 0.69 and 0.60 are considered, it can be concluded that both male and female agricultural education students in Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku opined that they excellent developed snail farming skills as results of exposure to practical snail farming exercises.

Test of Hypotheses

Female

07

2.52

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the rating of male and female agricultural education students' snail farming skills development programme in terms of meeting their need.

Table 3:	and Female Programme	Agriculture Meeting th	ent t-test on the Signal Education Stu- reir Needs	dents	Snail Farmin	g Skills	B Development
Variable	Ν	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	Std Error	t	Sign for 2 tailed
Male	05	2.64	0.35				

0.38

10

0.16

0.69

0.49

Table 3 shows t = 0.69, df = 10, p > 0.05 at 0.49. Therefore, since p value calculated at 2-tailed test of 0.49 is greater than the p-value provided at 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, it means that there is no significant difference in the rating of male and female agricultural education students' snail farming skills development programme in terms of meeting their need. This result emanated from the fact that the skills development programme met both the male and female students' expectations.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the snail farming skills developed by male and female agricultural education students as results of exposure to practical.

Table 4:	Summary o Skills Devel of Exposure	f Independe loped by Ma e to Practica	ent t-test on the Si ale and Female Ag al	gnific gricul	cant Difference tural Educatio	e in the on Stude	Snail Farming ents as Results
Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	Std Error	t	Sign for 2 tailed
	0.5	0.64	0.60				

Male	05	2.64	0.69			
			10	0.27	-1.10	0.27
Female	07	2.74	0.60			

IIARD – International Institute of Academic Research and Development

Table 4 shows t = -1.10, df = 10, p > 0.05 at 0.27.. Therefore, since p value calculated at 2-tailed test of 0.27 is greater than the p-value provided at 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, it means that there is no significant difference in the snail farming skills developed by male and female agricultural education students as results of exposure to practical. This result emanated from the fact both the male and female students opined that they excellently developed snail farming skills measured due to exposure to practical snail farming.

Discussion of Major Findings

The results related to specific objective and research question one revealed that both male and female agricultural education students in Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku opined that the practical snail farming skills development programme met their expectation because it addresses their needs for snail farming skills development. The results of test of hypothesis one also revealed that there is no significant difference in the rating of male and female agricultural education students' snail farming skills development programme in terms of meeting their need. This result emanated from the fact that the skills development programme met both the male and female students' expectations. The finding of this study is in line with the position held by Makusidi, et al (2017) when they reported that to venture into snail farming NCE vocational agricultural education students programme must be designed to address the need to develop planning skill, pen construction skills, sterilization skills, feeding skills, incubation skills, hatching and harvesting skills. Similarly, the finding of this study is supported by the position held by Ekezie (2019) who reported the need for agricultural education graduating students who wants to go into snail farming business to be assisted to develop hatchability skills, skills in pen construction, skills in snail feed preparation, accounting skills, strategic planning skills, communication skills and business management skills. Consequently, the expectation of agricultural education students irrespective of their gender was only met because the practical snail farming programme addressed their skill needs.

The results related to objective and research question two revealed that male and female agricultural education students in Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku opined that they excellent developed snail farming skills as results of exposure to practical snail farming exercises. The results related to the test of hypothesis two also revealed that there is no significant difference in the snail farming skills developed by male and female agricultural education students as results of exposure to practical. This result emanated from the fact both the male and female students opined that they excellently developed snail farming skills measured due to exposure to practical snail farming. This finding is supported by the finding of Ekezie (2019) who reported that students acquired essential skills for sail farming as a panacea for entrepreneurship development to micro scale practical farming activities. The finding of this study is also supported by the finding of Onah, et al (2021) when they reported the need to assist students with practical entrepreneurship training in snail farming in order to enable them be wealth creators and for self-employment.

Conclusions

Inferring from the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the need and expectations of agricultural education students with regards to snail farming would only be met when the programme is designed to cover all essential skills they required for successful snail farming. It can also be concluded that when the snail farming skills development programme is designed to cover all essential skills areas and the implementation process is not faulty, agricultural education students at the Nigeria Certificate in Education level irrespective of their gender will develop the requisite

skills for successful performance of snail farming tasks. Consequently, the need to design practical programme for snail farming to address essential skills and implement the programme effectively cannot be overemphasised.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are put forward for implementation:

- 1. Agricultural education farm instructors should design practical snail farming programme to ensure the students are engaged with learning activities relating to planning, pen construction exercises, snail feeding tasks, sterilization exercises in the farm, incubation tasks in the farm, hatching and harvesting exercises.
- 2. Agricultural education farm lecturers and instructors should provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the abilities they have developed through starting and managing micro scale snail farm for a period of two semesters before graduation.

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