

Current Issues in Agricultural Education in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to determine the current issues in Agricultural education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Some of the current issues in Agricultural education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria include (1) Low enrollment in vocational Agricultural Education (2) Lack of funding for vocational Agricultural education in tertiary institutions (3) Lack of interest in research work in Agricultural Education. (4) Inadequate personnel in Agricultural Education and (5) Poor provision of infrastructural facilities. In the end the study recommends that Government should make funds available for agricultural education programmes, there should be serious governmental input/innovations in Agricultural Education sector in tertiary institutions to meet the world standards, and re-orientation programme should be made available for the benefit of learning and acquiring practical skills in Agricultural education programmes.

Keywords: *Current, Issues, Tertiary Institutions, Agricultural Education.*

INTRODUCTION

Current issues in education need the serious attention of Government, researchers, industries and universities due to rapid development in the world today. Education is the process of acquiring skills, knowledge and other talents that sustain individuals in the labor market. Agricultural education is generally focused on producing seasoned skilled manpower that will shape and develop agricultural industries around the world. Freddie (2004) noted that the decline in the number of students entering the field of agriculture has been on the rise over the years. The number of students studying agricultural education in Nigerian tertiary institutions is also dwindling. A reason for this decline is the way students view agricultural profession as being labour intensive and a profession for the less privileged in the society. But agriculture as a profession provides diverse food and fiber to feed the growing population of the world. Agricultural science is a deliberate attempt by man to cultivate crops, rear animals and care for them, for the benefit of feeding the world population. The teaching of agricultural education in tertiary institutions is aimed at producing citizens with skills, competencies and reasoned judgment to successfully live and add meaningfully to the economic growth of Nigeria. According to Abdulkareem (2005) a country's development is determined by its individual resources. The main significance of University education in Nigeria is the provision of the much needed skilled manpower to accelerate the growth of the economy.

Massaquoi, Tarawally, Bangali & Kande (2014) noted that tertiary education institutions offering agriculture programmes perform the roles of teaching, research and

service to the growth of the citizens. Tertiary education is meant to add to national development through appropriate manpower training in order to inculcate proper values for the positive growth of the individual and society. Also, the institution is to develop the intellectual potential of individuals to understand and appreciate their environment; to assist individual acquire positive skills that will enable them to be self-reliant and productive members of the society. The federal Government recognizes the crucial roles of agricultural education in tertiary institutions that they are entrenched in the policy of technological and productivity growth. The role of Agriculture is essential to all aspect of economic development through its educational curriculum, but there are many challenges worthy of nothing. The political system in Nigeria does not favor policy proposal made by others, hence abandonment of projects and programmes in agricultural education. The study therefore, focuses on current issues in Agricultural Education in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The issues include: Low enrollment of students, lack of funding, lack of interest in Agricultural Education research work, inadequate personnel and Poor Provision of infrastructural facilities in Agricultural Education in tertiary institutions.

Low enrollment of students in vocational Agricultural Education:

The major factors that contribute to low enrollment in Vocational Agricultural Education in tertiary institutions include lack of awareness of agricultural education benefit, agricultural students inability to secure employment after graduation, poor societal perception and practical intensive nature of agriculture.

The need and prospect of agricultural education is to educate students to acquire skills in agriculture for good employment into the agricultural sector. This can be initiated through sensitization of students at the secondary school cadre. Brian, Lisa & James (2004) noted that recruitment efforts for enrollment into agricultural education need to be directed to students at the secondary school level. When students are aware of the need and prospect of agricultural education, level of enrollment into the programme will be increased. Agricultural students in secondary schools should know the objectives of agricultural education which include: stimulating and sustaining students interest in agriculture; enabling students acquire basic knowledge and develop practical skill in agriculture; and make students understand the opportunities in agriculture. The awareness will encourage the students to enroll in agricultural education programmes in tertiary institutions. Improving student's enrollment into vocational Agricultural Education programme in tertiary institutions is very important for the purpose of providing enough students to be trained to manage the nations' agricultural industry. The school authority should advertise the programme to create awareness about the importance of agricultural education that will enable students enroll into the programme. Dai Kosi, Tsadidey, Isaac & Millicent (2008) reported that there are thousands of young university graduates roaming the streets in search of seemingly unavailable jobs. Jaison, Richard and Yaqin (2014) noted that recent graduates are finding it increasingly difficult to secure a job, and those who do find works are often confined to low-wage positions. Where there is dearth in job availability post-graduation students will find it difficult to enroll in any of such programme. Okiror and Otabong (2015) noted that Agricultural courses are perceived as a course reserved for the less intelligent and less privileged and students who study agriculture at the University often do so by chance assignment from the selection body

rather than by choice. The image and perception of students about agricultural education needs positive change (Baliyan & Nenty, 2015). There is need to encourage more students to become involved in farming in order to produce enough to feed the growing population of Nigeria. Another reason for low enrollment is the perception of practical intensive nature of agriculture. Too many manual equipments to work with are involved, too many hours of labour outside and in the sun is required etc. However, if funds are made available for training in modern technology, the manual nature of the work will be greatly reduced. Consequently, student's enrollment will increase.

Lack of funding vocational Agricultural Education in tertiary institutions:

Funding is the act of providing financial assist by Government to finance program or project. When Vocational Agricultural Education is not adequately funded in tertiary institution the operation and functionality of the programme suffers. A good foundation of any organization needs good funding to be productive. Lack of funding is the most serious and current issue that has threatened the achievement of good quality education in Nigeria. The problem of lack of funding of education has been a nuisance to educational development in the country. Canice, Christian and Joseph (2007) maintained that a major constraint to attaining academic excellence in tertiary institutions is financial constraints which make many institutions of higher learning in Nigeria unable to build lecture halls and student's hostels, equip laboratories and workshops, and pay staff salaries, research grants and allowances. Due to inadequate funding, institutions are not able to employ additional personnel. Also, lack of funding for tertiary institutions leads to inadequate and outdated library books and Journals, inadequate scientific materials, nonexistent fund for conferences and exchange programme for academic staff. Umunadi, (2017) opined that Vocational and Technical education institutions in Nigeria face serious financial problems today because the industries and the existing organizations that are the main consumers of the vocational products are not supporting and financing vocational and technical education programmes. Vocational and technical education does not have funds needed to execute developmental research projects and programmes. Hence, Nigeria farmers in the university find it difficult to compete because the institutions do not have the equipment and conducive environment to operate.

Lack of interest in research work in Agricultural Education in tertiary institutions:

Research is the way by which new discoveries are made and new innovation are developed to provide solutions to the problems of the society. Institutions must conduct research to enhance the developmental growth of industries and society at large. But, when there is lack of interest in research work, the reason for lack of interest must be addressed. Some of the reasons for lack of interest in research work in Agricultural Education include: inadequate funding to conduct quality research, lack of accessible land for research work, facilities not conducive for research work and Government neglect of universities and industries. Based on the neglect by the Government very little research takes place in tertiary institutions in Nigeria and that much of the research that takes place at tertiary institutions is of an academic nature and pay little attention to the utility of results.. Issues of concern include inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, the declining quality of research and teaching, expertise needs to guide policy and relevant research for the development of the county (Ekong and Eicher, 2006). There is need to

enrich, support and motivate agricultural educators to invest more on research that will contribute more to nation building. Agricultural educators should develop a research program, build the program on a sound theoretical base, engage in collaborative research and evaluate their research program.

Inadequate personnel in Agricultural Education:

One of the current issues in agricultural education is inadequate personnel in Agricultural Education department. This partially stem from students' lack of interest in studying agricultural education. This created opportunities for growing shortages of qualified lecturers in the tertiary institution. According to John & Agba (2010) without adequate number of quality inspiring personnel, well knowledgeable in their subject area and fully prepared to meet their responsibilities in class and research work, educated personnel will be difficult to acquire. Ajayi (2007) stated that good personnel are needed for good quality education which in turn is essential for social change, societal transformation and national growth. The importance of Agricultural personnel cannot be over emphasized. There is need for personnel in the attainments of good education in the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. The institutions do not have enough personnel to effectively cope with teaching and learning activities. The few available lecturers are seriously over worked. Bamiro (2012) noted that the achievement of good quality education with good personnel in higher education will be great if the needs of the lecturers are met. Achievement of good quality in tertiary institutions needs personnel of good quality and knowledgeable in the subject area. Boone & Boone (2007) also noted that if the agricultural education profession is going to grow and prosper in the 21st century, the system needs to provide quality and qualified teachers to do the work.

Poor Provision of Infrastructural facilities:

Infrastructural facilities for learning include, but not limited to, workshops, classrooms, laboratory, hostels, electricity, water, staff offices, library and functioning farm land. These basic infrastructural facilities give support to the development of the students and help in the productivity of the institution. But in most institutions, the provisions of these amenities are lacking or very limited. Oyesola (2016) also added that infrastructural facilities like electricity, water supply and road are lacking in Nigeria. In a situation where these facilities are lacking, the growth of the institution is adversely affected. Students of tertiary institution are studying in poorly ventilated, illuminated and dilapidated classroom buildings which are environmentally demoralizing. Some lecturers share small offices and hope for future when they will have proper accommodation, but this future is never realized in a lot of institutions instead it gets worst (Odetunde, 2004). The national universities commission's need assessment survey which was reported by Emmanuel (2008) indicated that about 30% of Nigerian students' population has adequate access to workshops, laboratories, classrooms, lecture halls and libraries. It also reports that libraries are deficient in terms of current books, journals and electronic support facilities. This minimal provision cannot encourage scholars to partake in this relevant course of study.

Conclusions

The study covered current issues in agricultural education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The issues covered include low enrollment of student in vocational agricultural education in tertiary institution, lack of funding in vocational agricultural education and lack of interest in research work in vocational agricultural education in tertiary institutions. Others include inadequate personnel in Agricultural Education and Poor provision of infrastructural facilities in tertiary institutions. Vocational Agricultural Education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria needs more attention by the Government. Quality education and qualified lecturers are prerequisites for the production of quality products for the labour market. There is need for the government to urgently train and maintain refresher courses occasionally for teachers in order to improve the condition of tertiary institutions in the country.

Recommendation

This study recommends that Government should make funds available for agricultural education programme. There should be more research work done in agricultural education and results published for industrial use. The Nigerian Government should employ more personnel where needed. Good infrastructural facilities should be provided by the Government to create good learning environment. There should be a re-orientation programme from time to time about the benefit of learning. Government should sponsor lecturers to attend workshops and conferences.

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