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# AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE EDUCATION CURRICULUM FOR VALUES AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: AN APPRAISAL

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By

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## **Abstract**

*An appraisal of the Nigerian Agricultural science education curriculum for values and national development became necessary due to emerging societal needs. The curriculum contents and the roles of the Agricultural education needed to be examined in relation to the self-employment policy of the present administration in Nigeria, in -which skill acquisition is a key element to national development. This paper identified Agricultural Education dispositional skills and equally highlighted how effective Agricultural education instruction can stem the tide of self value and national development. This article recommended that Agricultural education should be made compulsory for students at Primary and Secondary school levels as well as its inclusion in general courses at all higher level of education. This will help in developing the needed skill for self-employment and to empower the youth's employment for national development.*

Youth restiveness and unemployment in Nigeria has been a bane to national development. Many stakeholders have contributed their stake to the issue by proffering vocational training as a way forward. In the light of this, Agricultural science education is a core vocational course that could be used as a tool to meeting the national employment challenges. A critical appraisal of the present curriculum of agricultural science education is therefore necessary in achieving a national objective of eliminating poverty and improving the living standard of the Nigerian populace. An improved well delivered curriculum will not only improve the food security status but will serve as a boost to the national economy in the long run.

## **Curriculum Concept**

Curriculum is the embodiment of a Programme of learning which includes its philosophy, the content, approach and assessment. On the other hand, curriculum is an educational plan that spells out which goals and objectives to be achieved, which topics are to be covered, and which methods are to be used for teaching learning and evaluation.

Coles (2003) as cited in Alabi (2012) argued that curriculum is more than the list of topics to be covered by an additional programme. The author established that a curriculum is a policy statement about a piece of education and secondly as an indication as to ways in which the policy is to be realized through a Programme of action, and that curriculum is the sum of all activities, experience and learning opportunities and the learning opportunities for which institution such as society or teacher takes responsibility directly or by default.

The Edu Qn A.Com site states: the definition of curriculum as that which supports a complex network of physical, social and intellectual condition that shapes and reinforces the behaviour of individuals and takes into account the "individual's perceptions and interpretation of the environment in order to reinforce the learning objectives and facilitates the evaluation procedures.

As contained in our National Policy on Education, a by-product of a national curriculum conference, Nigerians from all walks of life debated their own aims and contents of education in the country ( Ojelabi, (1980) cited in Olajuwon, (2008). The final document of this expression came into existence in 1977 as the National Policy on Education, as reviewed in 1981, 1989, 1998 and 2004. Education was conceived as an instrument "par excellence" in achieving national unity, objectives and goals.

The Nigerian educational system is in a state of confusion and disarray as a result of inconsistencies, non-implementation of educational policies, corruption practices perpetrated by the stakeholders, there has been a clarion call of all an sundry to re-examine and appraise the Nigerian educational system in line with current trends.

### **National Development Concept**

Education in a broad sense is a process by which an individual acquires the many physical and social capabilities demanded by the society in which he/she is born into to function. Education is an ultimate value and hence, through the provision of social services, it is an agent of change. Therefore, the single most significant complex is found in the educational system. Either the formal or informal education, education aids the production of a total man for him to be a useful member of the society.

National development therefore, can be described as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation. This is best achieved through development planning, which can be described as the country's collection of strategies mapped out by the government.

### **Agricultural Education Concept**

According to Egbule (2002) cited in Eze (2011) Agricultural education is the type of education employed in training learners in the process of agricultural productivity as well as the techniques for teaching agriculture. Presently, Agricultural education in Nigeria takes place at the formal and informal levels. At informal level, extension officers or agents trained the learners or farmers on modern agriculture production processes outside the school system while, at the formal level, trained teachers teaches students at various level of educational system.

### **Objectives of Agricultural Education**

According to the senior secondary education curriculum (1998) for SS 1 - SS 3, the overall purpose of the revised curriculum is to provide students with sufficient knowledge and skills that will enable them to explore their talents and enrich agricultural science education in Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of senior secondary Agricultural education should be to:

- i. Stimulate and sustain students interest in Agriculture
- ii. Impart functional knowledge and practical skills in agriculture to students
- iii. Prepare students for further studies in area of agriculture
- iv. Prepare students for occupation in Agriculture.

The increasing need for functional knowledge and skill for productive life shows that agricultural education can add values to the national development of any nation.

### **Role of Agricultural Education in National Development**

Agricultural education involves the acquisition of saleable skills and techniques in agriculture and increased productivity both in crop and animals. In Nigeria, there have been problems with human empowerment in relation to economic development. Hunger and malnutrition diminish ability of people to learn, work and care for themselves and family members.

Njoku (2009) opined that for the country to aim at becoming one of the 20 largest global economics when it is at crossroad of dilapidated infrastructure, simmering corruption, fostering poverty and decay business sense of Nigerians, agriculture without doubt is the area to look to for adding values to the national development. Agriculture can be an asset in the area of employment generation, food security, increased national productivity, small scale enterprise, women empowerment and youth organization and empowerment.

Stan (1987) noted that agriculture employs over 70 percent of the rural population in Nigeria. This is indeed good as part of the avenue to improve the values

of Nigerian and also to uplift the nations development. Reiterating the importance of Agriculture in employment generation, the Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Ademola Adeshina noted on different occasions that, the agricultural sector would provide more employment opportunities in the country if given adequate attention. Starting from its curriculum by making sure that, the objectives of Agriculture education in the national curriculum are implemented. The implementation of these objectives will diffuse the minds of Nigerian graduates from looking for white collar job which is not available in the country because the curriculum would have equipped them with adequate skill and knowledge that will enable them to be self-employed and even employ others.

### **Food Security**

The food and Agriculture Organization of United Nation (FAO; 2000) defined food security as access by all people at all times to produce the food needed for health and active life. FAO, indicated that, approximately seven hundred and ninety million people in developed countries and thirty-four million in developed countries, mainly women and children are not eating sufficient food to meet their basic nutritional value. Agricultural education can play vital role in food security by developing interest of the younger generation in the production of food by giving some incentives that will encourage them into commercial agriculture such as; provision of loan with little or no interest, procurement of modern farm machine, provision of highbred seeds and animals.

### **Increased National Productivity**

The Nigerian Agricultural sector have been known to being not just devoted to growing food for the village economy, but a substantive percentage of agriculture resources have also been devoted to growing cash crops like cotton, oil palm, groundnut, cocoa, coffee and others because these are largely export crops, agriculture becomes an important export sector and earn foreign exchange for the nations economy.

According to Njoku (2009) in Bulus (2011) noted that, agricultural sector is next to oil and gas under the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). He discloses that, agriculture contribute 42 percent to the National GDP. Also as rural income expands, rural purchasing power grows, and the rural sector can become a market for urban industries.

### **Women Empowerment**

According to Eze (2011), women play significant roles in agriculture across the world. About 70 percent of the agriculture workers, 80 percent of the food producers and 10 percent of those who process basic food stuff are women. In addition, they undertake 60 to 90 percent of the rural market. Thus making up more than two third of the workforce in agricultural production. Based on this focus, women are to be

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empowered academically with modern methods, skills and technology. This will improve their live at all levels of human endeavour and launch them to their full potential in real aspects of national development.

#### **Youth Organization & Empowerment**

The main purpose of youth organization in agriculture is to develop vocational skills in the younger generation at the early stage of their life by using agricultural education to catch them young for national development. The formation of the Young Farmer's Club (YFC) in primary and secondary schools is a welcome development. The club is an association in which young people (9-20years) are encourage to learn about better farming system and home making ( Ogunftditimi, 1984). The members formed under the guidance of the agricultural teachers, agricultural extension officer and local voluntary leasers are able to learn by doing the following; poultry farming, piggery, snail farming, rabbitary, vegetable garden etc. Re-introduction of this youth organization in our schools will equip the young graduates and rural dwellers with adequate vocational skills that will make them self-employed and contribute positively to national development.

#### **Conclusion**

For a nation to have value and attain national development, agricultural education must be enhanced to meet the set out objectives in the schools curriculum. Agriculture must be refocused from a routine cultural activities to a mechanized system of farming which will arose the interest of the young graduate to venture into agriculture and in-return, it shall reduce the rate of unemployment in the country. In national development, employment creation is important, food security; youth organization and empowerment are also core issues. Agricultural education is crucial to meeting these possibilities. When introduced at the right time, right place and by trained teachers, agricultural education can be a tool for national growth and development.

#### **Recommendations**

1. Agricultural Education should be made compulsory for both primary and secondary school and not as elective subject as it being practiced in secondary schools.
2. Agricultural education courses should be part of the general courses at all higher level of education.
3. There school be increase in subventions to schools, prompt payment of teacher's salaries and allowances for better performance in schools.

### Academic Excellence

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4. There should be adequate in-service training, workshops and seminars for agricultural science teachers to equip themselves with modern techniques of farming.
5. Teachers of agricultural science in secondary school and tertiary institution of learning should be motivated by paying them science and hazard allowance.
6. More hours of practical agriculture and skills acquisition should be introduced in schools.
7. Modern equipments in agriculture should be supplied to various schools to remove the notion that agriculture is attached with druggery.
8. Young farmer's club should be restructured to serve its purpose in schools.

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