
TRANSFORMING OF NIGERIAN ECONOMY THROUGH VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper attempts to analyze the importance of vocational agricultural Education as a strategy for transforming Nigerian Economy. It begins by defining transformation, stating the purpose of education, defining vocational agricultural education, the strategies adopted by vocational agric education as an agent of transformation in the country and some of the barriers facing vocational agricultural education. finally the paper recommended that vocational Agricultural education teachers should be trained through workshops, seminars and conferences among others.

Transformation actually means a complete change from one situation to another a total departure from the old order of doing things to a new one. Transformation does not come accidently, but requires a deliberate effort. To change from failure to a successful person calls for performances of some activities that will facilitate the actualization of such dreams. Transformation calls for practical action and pronouncement but requires a number to tasks to be done. Uwaifor (2005) similarly opined that transformation is the result of intellectual work and that the most proactive facilitator of national transformation is through education technology and trainings.

The purpose of education in Nigeria has long been identified as stated by the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) as the process that helps the whole man develop and change physically, mentally, morally and technologically. To enable him/her function effectively in any environment that he/she may find himself and to be more productive, self-fulfilling and attain self-actualization. The federal Republic of Nigeria also introduced vocational Agricultural Education and defined it as education designed to prepare individuals to acquire practical skills, basic and scientific knowledge and attitude required as craftman and sub-professional level. (FRN, 2004) adopted education as an instrument for national development and change. It is believed that the quality of education is the key variable for the survival of Nigeria in a competitive economy.

(Narling-Hammond, 2010) stated that the parents, practitioners and policy makers agree that the key to transform the nation's economy is to improve quality of education with more emphasis on vocational agricultural education.

Fafunwa (2000) pointed out that education is the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitude and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the transformation of the society in which he lives. Education therefore involves the process of transmitting culture in terms of continuity and growth for disseminating knowledge. Specifically, the National Policy on Education stipulated that education in Nigeria aims at, the acquisition, development and inculcation of proper value orientation knowledge and skill for the survival of the individual and societal transformation.

Education in this context points to the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skill, which will enable an individual to develop into useful members of the nation.

The implementation of educational policy has always been the key factor in the educational innovations which could lead to rapid transformation. However, the education system in Nigeria has become more notable in terms of frequency and intensity of violent incidences, drug abuse and addiction. This paper therefore xrays the role of Nigerian educational system in the transformation of Nigeria economy with vocational agricultural education.

Vocational Agricultural Education

Osinem (2007) perceived vocational agricultural education as a process of imparting knowledge, skills and attitude in agriculture to the learner at any level Obibuaku (1983) describes it as including education and training given in agriculture from primary school through secondary and special schools to the university. All these definitions and perception underline the fact that vocational agriculture education instruction stresses on skills that learners must use on specific agricultural job, provides technical background that increases the learner's knowledge of jobs they are doing and develop interest and attitudes needed for the successful execution of such jobs. Vocational agricultural education covers not only crops and animal production but also areas relating to soil management machinery operation, processing, marketing and storage of farm products. Furthermore, maintenance of favourable environment and participating in rural leadership activities constitute vital contents of vocational agricultural education.

Objectives of Vocational Agricultural Education

Vocational education in agriculture is an integral part of the nation's public school education (general education), it enhances the development in students of the

ability to study and the ability to solve problems efficiently, which requires skills in collecting and interpreting data.

A comprehensive vocational education programme, according to Philip (2000), includes the following:

1. Assist the nations citizens to develop the attitudes, understanding and abilities regarding agriculture necessary for their future welfare and the welfare of agriculture.
2. Develop understanding and the interrelationship of agriculture and other segment of society
3. Develop understanding and appreciation of agriculture for vocational and leisure interest.
4. Promote creative activities of students
5. Assist present and prospective farmers in improving their efficiency in farming
6. Provide guidance regarding occupational opportunities in farm and off farm occupations requiring knowledge and skills in agriculture

Vocational agricultural education is a form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare people for employment in recognized occupation. It provides the skills, knowledge necessary for effective employment in specific occupation.

Okoro (2006) defines vocational agricultural education as education that provides a special programme offered at secondary and post -secondary levels. It is also regarded as that aspect of the total education process that focuses on individual occupation.

As stipulated by Osuala (1987) vocational agricultural education is used comprehensively to embrace skill acquisition. Without vocational agricultural education and other vocational subjects such as business education, fine arts home economic education, computer education etc. no country can boast of any change or development (transformation). It is on this background that, the federal Government listed vocational agricultural courses to include.

Scope of Agricultural Education

Vocational Education in agriculture is to permit and encourage the provision of a vocation in agriculture for persons, other than present and prospective farmers, in occupation requiring knowledge and skills in agriculture. In many schools more than half the students enrolled are in programmes for off-farm agricultural workers. Vocational education in agriculture and renewable natural resources prepare students for the world of work in the following occupational areas.

1. Agricultural production
 - a. Animal science
 - b. Plant science

- c. Farm mechanism
 - d. Farm business management
2. Agricultural supply and service business
 - a. Agricultural chemicals
 - b. Feeds
 - c. Seeds
 - d. Fertilizers
3. Agricultural mechanics business
 - a. Agricultural power and machinery
 - b. Agricultural mechanics skills
 - c. Soil management
 - d. Soil management
4. Agricultural product businesses
 - a. Food products
 - b. Non-food products
5. Ornamental horticulture
 - a. Arboriculture
 - b. Floriculture
 - c. Landscaping
 - d. Nursery
 - e. Turf management
6. Agricultural resources
 - a. Forests
 - b. Recreation
 - c. Fish
 - d. Water
 - e. Air
 - f. Soil
7. Forestry
 - a. Forests
 - b. Protection
 - c. Wood utilization
 - d. Agricultural technology
 - e. Forestry technology

All these areas of vocational agric education enhance speedy transformation of the national economy, as stated in the Federal Government National Policy on Education (2004).

The importance of vocational agricultural education in building and sustaining economic development and transformation in Nigeria.

According to (Akpan, 2002) there is the need to empower youth and adult with necessary knowledge, skills and competencies for survival in the new millennium. Vocational agricultural education is the gateway through which these knowledge, skills and competences can be successfully transferred. The author stresses that vocational agricultural education enhances transformation of the nation in the following ways.

Youth Empowerment

Through vocational agricultural education the youth will be sensitized, mobilized motivated and gingered for self-employment and self-reliance. Effective acquisition of vocational agricultural skill will inculcate entrepreneurial skills that would help the youth to be self-reliant Akpan (2012) affirmed that vocational agricultural education equipped individuals with managerial skill to effectively utilize the human and material resources in their environment through the acquisition of skills and competencies in agricultural education and other related areas.

Manpower Development

A vocational agricultural education provides a solid base for healthy multi-cultural transformation that would eliminate over dependence on foreign economy. The aim of vocational agricultural education is to provide adequately trained and skilled manpower necessary for agricultural and commercial section of the nations' economic development. On this premise Okoro (2006) opined that vocational agricultural education must aim at producing students that would acquire saleable skills that would help them to be employable. It is expected to:

1. Provide an introduction to professional studies in engineering and technologies which is the bedrock of economics transformation
2. Lead to human capital development that enhances empowerment of people and strengthening economy for economic transformation
3. Provide training and empowerment for necessary skill leading to the production of craftsmen and other skilled personnel who will assist in transforming the economy of the nation.

Formation of Vocational Agricultural Attitude

Vocational agricultural education educates the youth with the proper knowledge, behaviour and attitude needed for successful vocational agric education career desirable social and cultural behaviours Robert (2001) concluded that career education guide individual to fit into the job opportunity available with the system of national economic development and transformation.

Strategies for Transforming of the Nations Economy through vocational agricultural education

The following strategies would build and sustain the Nigeria economy through vocational agricultural education.

1. Making vocational agricultural education programme compulsory from junior secondary level would ensure early acquisition of vocational agricultural education skills by the youths.
2. It would reduce drastically the incidence of dropout from the formal school system through improve instructional delivery with relevance quality and efficient educational programme
3. Training the vocational agricultural education teachers to be well equipped for the task ahead of them and also giving vocational agricultural education graduates the opportunity to work any office/parastatals relevant to their training and skills.
4. Empowering the citizens to be self-reliant through the promotion of vocational agriculture education and training.
5. Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate level of literacy, manipulative, communicative and life skills, as well as ethical, moral, civic values needed for solid foundation for life-long learning which lead to rapid economic transformation.
6. Promoting vocational agricultural education and training as a means of reducing unemployment, youth restiveness, violence, militancy and kidnapping in the society which may affect rapid transformation.

Barriers in vocational agricultural education that hinders economic transformation

1. **Insufficient Funding:** Vocational agricultural education in our various institutions of learning is not adequately funded to procure, maintain and make replacement of non-functional tools and equipment for teaching when necessary. This affects the effective acquisition of vocational agric skills.
2. **Poor maintenance culture:** The maintenance culture of facilities and equipment available in most of our institutions of learning are poor where instructional tools are available, they are obsolete and non-functional as they need repairs and servicing or replacement. This creates a problem to effective acquisition of the needed skills.
3. **Lack of self empowerment:** Vocational agricultural education in our various institutions of learning are not often empowered through in service training, research, conferences, seminars and workshops to update their knowledge and skills in teaching agric. Education courses to meet technological changes in the society which in turns deny vocational Agric Educators the acquisition new skills, knowledge and attitude needed for rapid economic transformation.
4. **Insufficient Basic Instructional Tools:** Vocational agric education as a discipline is confronted with insufficient tools for effective instructional delivery and skills training. Some institutions of higher learning do not have workshop facilities while others have few outdated instructional tools/equipment for practical exercises. This hinders the effective acquisition of vocational agric skills and competencies to meet the challenge of technological changes.

Conclusion

Nigeria is faced with numerous and diversified challenges relating to economic transformation and development which vocational agric education programme is the gateway that could be adopted to solve the nagging problem of the nation therefore, government should create more awareness in student enrollment of vocational agricultural education programme as a necessity and increase been self-reliant and generate employment. For transformation in this sector to be effective or become a reality government, stakeholders most contribute positively to support vocational agriculture education and encourage enrolment of youths in this sectors .

Recommendations

1. There should be adequate funding, budgetary allocation for the procurement and maintenance of instructional facilities and equipment should be made available by the government
2. Government should equip schools with modern technological facilities.
3. Vocational agricultural education teachers should be retrained through workshops, seminars and conferences.
4. Government should supply schools with modern agricultural facilities
5. More emphasis should be laid on the use of instructional materials.

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