

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA BEYOND 2020

Musa Ibrahim

Abstract

This paper attempted to look at the relevance of Agriculture and Agricultural Education in current developmental plan and efforts in transforming the nation by the government. The paper looked at the relationship between Agriculture and Agricultural education in the national vision 20:2020 plan, it pointed out how Nigeria's economy can be strengthened through improved and sustainable agricultural education. The paper also pointed out the kind of agricultural education needed beyond year 2020. Recommendations proffered included increased funding of the Agricultural sector, sustained training and retraining of teachers in agriculture as well as extension workers. Education that can promote export marketing should be emphasized and maintained.

Keywords: Agricultural Education, Development, Funding of Agricultural education and vision 20:2020

There is the belief that education is no doubt, an indispensable tool for any meaningful national development. For education to be useful for positive development, it must be a functional type which is the one that allows the learner to be able to put into practice what was learnt and use it to produce something useful. Education allows one to acquire functional skills for identity, knowledge, power, as well as freedom from economic exploitation. Education is a mean through which the developing countries can meet the challenges posed by technological development of the present century and beyond. The whole hope of human progress is dependent upon growing influence of education, science, and technology.

Agricultural education which is vocational has been viewed as a productive means of dealing with rapid change in the social and economic context; securing employment, developing new skills and creating viable enterprises, which can play role in Nigerian economy.

Concept of Education

In the words of Denga (2000), education is 'the complete development of the individual from cognitive, affective, and psychomotor perspectives in a positive direction'. Adama (2006) reported that, there are two kinds of education, one teaches how to live and other how to earn living; the first is general education for all and the second is technical or vocational education for those who wishes to learn various practical occupations. By educating an individual means trying to give him/her some desirable knowledge, understanding, skills, interests, attitudes and critical thinking. Successful conveyance of these attributes to individual or group means developing them; Nigeria's education curriculum need to be looked into with view to improving it. According to Ayodele, Obafemi and Ebong (2013) Education is the bedrock of any development. The present state of education in Nigeria is pathetic, with secondary school level at 13% quality rate, and primary school levels are even lower than this. The literacy rate in Nigeria is presently less than the Asia average of 90%. Japan in fact, has a 100% literacy rate, and the Nigeria's figure keeps dropping due to lack of adequate and proper funding of education (Ayodele *et al.*;2013). The development of abilities and skills in the citizenry has been the main factor propelling the education policies of developing countries as they are geared towards making the people comfortable and at the same time, enabling them to harness the natural resources nature has endowed them with (Egun, 2009). Special type of education like agricultural education is needed to transform the citizens into more productive ones.

Agricultural Education

Musa Ibrahim

Agricultural education is the teaching of agriculture, natural resources, and land management through hands on experience and guidance to prepare students for entry level jobs or to further education to prepare them for advanced agricultural jobs (Wikipedia, 2015). Agricultural education has been an essential factor in the success of agricultural development in Nigeria. It is that part of the total educational process that provides knowledge, develops skills, and inculcates the attitude necessary for entry and progress in an agri-business. It gets people into jobs that are requiring specialized training in agriculture.

Development

Development is the gradual transformation of something into stronger, better and improved form. A country is classified as developed when it is able to provide qualitative life for her citizenry. Nigeria in the last fifty years has been battling with the problems of development in spite of huge human, material and natural resources in her possession (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011).

Gboyega (2003) described development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material well being of all citizens in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future. It also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks to improve personal physical security and livelihoods and expansion of life chances. Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) opined that development is essential and critical to growth and sustenance of any country.

National Development

The term national development is used to refer to a state of maturity which characterizes a nation-state. This maturity results from the interplay of modern political, economic and social forces and processes which transform diverse people, shaping a common geographical area. The nation-state is characterized by governmental machinery capable of commanding loyalty, keeping order, eliciting legitimacy, fostering integration, permitting mass participation; and satisfying popular wants and expectations. It also has a skilled citizenry which exercises its capacity to create a highly industrial society and manipulates its environment to obtain a high quality of life for the generality of the population (Lukpata, 2013). Attaining the state of development is a dream of any nation; our country Nigeria also has the dream and vision which she wants to realize in year 2020.

Nigeria Vision 20:2020

Nigeria wants to realize the dream of becoming one of the top 20 economies in the world by the year 2020 which it called "Vision 20: 2020". The focus of this goal is to accelerate the country's economic growth and place it on a sound footing of sustained and accelerated socio-economic development. As part of the Vision 20:2020, Nigeria seeks to consolidate its leadership role in Africa and establish itself as a significant player in the global economic and political arena.

This is why the country has chosen the following vision Statement:

"By 2020, Nigeria will have a large, strong, diversified, sustainable and competitive economy that effectively harnesses the talents and energies of its people and responsibly exploits its natural endowments to guarantee a high standard of living and quality of life to its citizens (Vision 2020, 2010).

Attainment of the Vision would enable the country achieve a high standard of living for its citizens. It was developed by Nigerians for the Nigerian people and involved a process of thorough engagement with all stakeholders across all levels of government and society. It is therefore, a rallying point for all Nigerians, regardless of ethnicity, political leaning, economic status, or religion behind a common cause of placing the country on a sustainable development path and transformation into a modern society better able to play a greater role in the committee of nations. The two broad objectives to be achieved are:

- Make efficient use of human and natural resources to achieve rapid economic growth and;

Agricultural Education and Development in Nigeria Beyond 2020

- Translate the economic growth into equitable social development for all citizens.
The vision also look at the context of globalization and the increasing relevance of Nigeria as a leading emerging market economy, the need for total transformation of Nigeria through long-term development management strategies has become compelling. Vision 20:2020 is important for the following reasons:
- Need for Nigeria to plan development on a long-term basis in order to achieve structural transformation;
- Need to reduce the country's overdependence on oil;
- Need to effectively transform the lives of Nigerians in terms of significant improvements in their standards of living; and
- Need for the country to take its rightful position among the nations of the world (Vision 20:2020, 2010). These needs can be achieved only if Nigeria's agricultural sector is performing well. In view of the fact that agriculture is a major driver of growth of the Nigerian economy, it must play a crucial role in achieving this vision. Accordingly, the vision for the agricultural sector shall be: "A technology driven agricultural sector that is profitable, sustainable and meets the Socio-economic aspirations of the nation" (Vision 20:2020, 2010).

Modern Agriculture which embraces science and technology has a major impact on the national development. Therefore the role of agriculture in the national economy should be re-emphasized and factors influencing agricultural activities and food security put in place. Agricultural education is the most important factor that influences agricultural activities and national developmental processes.

Agricultural Education for National Development

The major aim of agricultural education for all citizens and particularly for the youth in schools is to expose them to various occupations in agriculture and prepare them for the different opportunities in agriculture. This calls for vocational course content aimed at the development of skills and competencies in agricultural practices (Egun, 2009). Most developing countries depend on agriculture to provide employment, foreign exchange, food and raw materials for the industry, but lag behind in introducing educational courses on sustainable agriculture, the effect of which made them remain dependants on other countries. Ayodele *et al.* (2013) noted that in Nigeria agriculture is the dominant economic activity, and that roughly 75% of the land is arable out of which about 40% is cultivated. Although the agricultural sector has strong potentials, it is faced with a lot of challenges which impede substantial growth of the sector. Some of the key challenges that face the sector include low productivity, non-competitiveness, weak domestic policies and inadequate funding. These challenges can be adequately addressed through a sound agricultural education.

Ibrahim (2014) reported that if all the agricultural education needs of the Nigerian citizens were to be adequately met, the nation's economy would be strengthened because their productivity would be increased because there is a direct relationship between individual resource productivity and nation building in the developmental processes. The improvement in productivity of each worker or farmer leads to improvement in earnings of investors as well as more financial capital for management, and more revenue for government.

Improvement in productivity is the most important factor in attaining growth in the economy and this is more so for agriculture which provides means of livelihood for over 65.0 per cent of the populace through subsistence production which is a predominant feature of agricultural production in Nigeria (Ukeje, 2000).

Growth Enhancement Support Scheme (GESS) an initiative of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture in 2011 but started operation in 2012; is aimed at developing the productivity of Nigerian farmers. The success of the scheme will require enhancement of farmers' education especially in information and communication technology (ICT). This brings the future of the agricultural education closer; that is looking at what the role of agricultural education should be by the year 2020.

Agricultural Education Beyond 2020

The required education beyond 2020 should lead to development of analytical skills, exposure to export marketing, total quality standards and comparative advantages. It should also facilitate confidence in ensuring sustainability with high productivity and quality of the produce while meeting international standards. Countries that have invested heavily in science and vocational education are now described as industrialized or developed and are self-sufficient in term of food production (Ezekiel-hart, 2011).

The “e-wallet” (a component of GESS) meaning electronic wallet is an initiation by the present government whereby farmers purchase fertilizer electronically through their handsets. This means that for the program to be perfected and sustained, agricultural education must be enriched in terms of content to be able to transform Nigerian farmers into becoming ICT complaints, to be able to participate in e-commerce or internet business as found in other part of the world. According to Ezekiel-hart (2011), curriculum issues, the teacher quality and getting Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to drive the system are among the myriad of policy issues that Nigeria has not effectively tackled. Rapid changes in telecommunications technology and the globalization of trade and labour market are added challenges which the nation must contend with to be relevant in the 21st century. It is not only realizing the Vision that matters but sustainability and maintenance of the achievements; therefore Nigeria must be able to improve the agricultural education to sustain the achievements.

How to Improve Agricultural Education to Sustain the Attained Vision

Agricultural education curriculum developers should start thinking of redesigning both the process and the content that drives the education in line with sustainability of the vision’s achievements. Integrating aspects of sustainability can be realized with well thought adjustment in the educational process. The following adjustments in education are what Nigeria need beyond year 2020 which were observed and reported by Wals and Bawden (2000):

- Adjustment from consumptive learning to discovery learning.
- Adjustment from teacher-centred to learner-centred arrangements.
- Adjustment from individual learning to collaborative learning.
- Adjustment from theory dominated learning to praxis-oriented learning.
- Adjustment from sheer knowledge accumulation to problematic issue orientation.
- Adjustment from content-oriented learning to self-regulative learning.
- Adjustment from institutional staff-based learning to learning with and from outsiders.
- Adjustment from low level cognitive learning to higher level cognitive learning.
- Adjustment from emphasizing only cognitive objectives to also emphasizing affective and skill-related objectives.

Nigeria’s visionary achievements in the national development plan can be sustained beyond 2020 if the education of the farmers and other citizens is well adjusted to meet the challenges of time. No society can rise above the level of its education, therefore, it is obvious that the higher the level of education of the nation the higher the level of its productivity. In Nigeria where 70% of the population is engaged in farming, provision of quality and sustainable agricultural education can transform the nation in general. Issues of funding must be looked into since all are aware of the nature of agricultural education which is vocational hence, the need for adequate funding for it to consolidate on the achievements.

Investing in agricultural education becomes necessary with the current uncertainties in global oil prices, not only the price, but also the reserve which will dry in not far future unlike agriculture which is more permanent in nature.

Conclusion

Education is the most essential factor for development especially in Nigeria where majority of the citizens are engaged in farming. This makes the agricultural education for sustainability a necessity. Shown is the importance of agricultural education in developmental processes. Its relevance in achieving the vision of the nation was highlighted as well as what it should be beyond the year 2020.

Recommendations

To ensure that Agricultural Education plays its roles in the process of national development, beyond the year 2020, the following recommendations are proffered:

- Increase funding of agricultural education because it is vocational in nature and thus requires special kind of funding.
- Reviving extension services at all levels to be sure of reaching the majority of farmers who reside in the rural and urban areas.
- Government and the organized financial institutions should consider playing better roles than before in granting loans for farming purposes and export promotion.
- Curriculum content of agricultural education should be enriched to meet the current global need.
- Education should be made easier and affordable not only to farmers alone but to all the citizens

References

- Adama, T.Z (2006). The Role of Vocational Education in the 21st Century. Paper Presented at the First conference of School of Vocational and technical Education. FCT College of Education, Zuba. 5th March, 2006.
- Ayodele, O.S., Obafemi, F.N & Ebong, F.S. (2013). Challenges facing the achievement of the Nigeria Vision20:2020. *Global Advanced Research Journal of Social Sciences (GARJSS)* 2(7) pp.143-157.
- Denga, V.B (2000). *Introduction to Teacher Education*. Kano: Jade Associate Ltd. Egun, A. C. (2009). Focusing agricultural education for better productivity in Nigeria in the 21st century. *International Journal of Educational Sciences* 1(2): 87-90.
- Ezekiel–hart, J. (2011) Reflections on politics and policies of education for vision 20:2020 *European Journal of Educational Studies*. 3(2) 365-374.
- Gboyega, A. (2003). Democracy and development: the imperative of local governance. An inaugural lecture, University of Ibadan. pp 6-7.
- Ibrahim, M. (2014) Agricultural education: a veritable tool for national transformation. Paper Presented at the 5th national conference and exhibition organized by school of vocational and technical education. Adeyemi college of education Ondo state 1st – 5th December, 2014.
- Lawal, T. & Oluwatoyin A. (2011). National development in Nigeria: issues, challenges and prospects. *Journal of public administration and policy research*. 3(9) 237-241.
- Lukpata, V.I (2013). National interest and national development in Nigeria. *International Journal of public administration and management research (IJPAMR)* 2(1) 63-68.
- Nigeria Vision 20:2020 (2010) Abridge version (document).
- Ukeje, E.U (2000) Productivity in agricultural sector. Retrieved on August 13, 2014 from www.cenbank.org/OUT/publication.
- Wals, A. & Bawden, R, (2000). *Integrating sustainability into agricultural education :dealing with complexity, uncertainty and diverging world view*. Gent: Universiteit Gent.
- Wikipedia (2015) Agricultural education. Retrieved on February 7, 2015 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/agricultural_education

