



INFLEUNCE OF VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURAL SCHOOL FARM ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF AGRICULTURAL STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LAU LGA, TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study determined the influence of vocational Agricultural School Farm on the academic performance of Agricultural Science Students in Secondary Schools in LAU LGA, Taraba State. One of the objectives of vocational agriculture is to prepare students for occupation in agriculture. This important objective cannot be accomplished without the use of adequate and pragmatic strategies that will enhance teaching and learning. Employing a descriptive survey research design, the study collected data by

administering a structured questionnaire to 70 respondents comprising of 50 teachers and 20 Non-

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academic staff. No sampling was done. The entire population was used. The questionnaire was validated, giving reliability co-efficient of 0.85%. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard

deviation, while T-test analysis was used to test the hypothesis at .05 level of significance. The findings revealed that agricultural teachers and non-academic staff in all the schools in the study area agreed on all the items presented on the two research questions. The findings of the study form the basis to draw conclusion that efforts are highly needed in vocational agricultural school farm establishment.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture no doubt plays an important role in the development of Nigeria Nation, hence, there is a need to focus on sustainability and increased agricultural productivity since it is agriculture that guarantees food supply and raw materials for many industries.

In Nigeria, agriculture is a major sector of the economy that provided employment for about 70-80% of the population. The sector is being transformed by commercialization both on the small, medium and large scale enterprise level (Melaiye, 2017). The student's graduate which is the backbone of every society is encouraged into farming after they graduated. The students received information and in some cases assist them in analyzing innovations towards agricultural development. It is however unfortunate that in spite of the little efforts by the students-household agriculture, empirical data are lacking on their participation may be because of inadequate exposure to school farm during their school days, hence, lack of practical skills by the students or inadequate skilled teachers to teach the practical or no land to perform the practical. Nigeria is rapidly growing in population and the need for food, shelter and other basic necessities of life are seriously on the increase. The available white collar jobs are inadequate to absorb the youths who graduated from schools, thereby leading to high rate of unemployment. The situation of unemployment in Nigeria as reported by the United Nation, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), (2006), and Central Bank of Nigeria (2013), revealed that about 60% of youths are unemployed, and this was buttressed by the National Bureau for statistics in (2016), and Yodatai (2017), which indicated that 40 million youths were unemployed after graduation from school. The mass unemployment has led to series of crimes like armed robbery, kidnapping and assassination all over the country. The current economic

meltdown in Nigeria occasioned by the fall in the price of crude oil, corruption, unemployment, poverty, insurgency and other social vices necessitates that the economy be diversified into agricultural businesses especially through entrepreneurship instruction. One of the key indices of a sustainable economy is the ability of a nation to provide gainful employment for its citizens so as to contribute to nation building. The productive strength of a nation is enhanced through agricultural programmes provided in the National Policy on Education; hence, agricultural education is one of such programmes.

Agricultural education according to Paul (2005) is a systematic programme of instruction available to students desiring to learn about the science, business and technology of plant, animal, production and/or about the environmental and natural resources systems. To Osinem (2007), Agricultural education is a process of imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes in agriculture to the learner at any level. Agricultural Education prepares students for successful career and a life time of informed choices in agriculture. Colleges of Education in Nigeria do offer agricultural education programme in their curricular. The programmes are designed to provide academic and professional course contents. The philosophy of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) Agricultural Education Programme is tied to the National Policy on Education which is for self-reliance based on the provision of teachers endowed with a balanced approach between principles and practice of agriculture.

Agricultural education programme, according to the National Commission for Colleges of Education (2002), is aimed at achieving the following objectives, to produce teachers who will be capable of motivating students to acquire interest and aptitude, and to develop in the student-teacher the appropriate agricultural information to the students in the context of their environment.

In schools, Vocational Agriculture is the teaching of skills, values, attitudes and related knowledge in the production, processing and marketing of agricultural and related products. ((Mbah, 1991 and Egbule, 2002) Students are expected to carry on short or long term practical activities and projects such as cultivation of crops, vegetables and fruits, raising of livestock for the school's consumption and for local market hence, play the role of preparing students for life-long learning in

agriculture and related subjects as well as enable them have an intelligent understanding of the problems and opportunities in their communities and the nation at large.

Vocational agriculture starts via defining occupational objectives, providing preparation for a job in agriculture and ending with the individual successfully entering entrepreneurship or jobs in agriculture, and such individuals will have capacities to continue to learn and transfer personal and occupational skills to meet the changing job requirements of the agricultural sector of a technological society (Egbule, 2002).

The focus of the national policy on agriculture is on food security, rural industrial and technological development. Food security in this context refers to availability and affordability of food by all people for a healthy nation. Consequently, vocational agriculture now and in the future should be geared towards the production of skilled, able and willing students capable of producing, processing and marketing food and related products on a large scale and using modern and efficient technologies (David, 2014).

A school farm is a faring initiative set up by school authorities in order to enable agricultural students acquire practical farming skills, to complement knowledge gained in the classroom, basically, school farms are created for the purposes of providing fundamental agricultural skills to inexperienced students, hence, creates an avenue for agricultural students to demonstrate and practice what they have learnt in the classroom.

Olaitan and Mana (2001) defined school farm as an area specifically marked for agricultural activities by school, this area usually possesses the potential required for agricultural productivity. It may be in school or at a fairly walking distance to the school. There are some acceptable qualities a school farm must possess, such as accessibility to the school and the community, and of course that can favor many types of arable crops such as yams, cassava and maize hence, crop rotation can be practiced.

School farm is also a component of the school activities which has link with a more productive agriculture, it is a selected plot of land in the school environment where students' carryout practical agriculture both in crop production and animal husbandry (Onwumere, 2016).

The importance of school farm cannot be overemphasized; Oblation and Mama (2001) outlined the needs of school farm as;

- i. Sources of money to the school
- ii. Sources of transfer of knowledge
- iii. For developing knowledge in students
- iv. For stimulating students interest in farming
- v. As a laboratory for Research
- vi. For recreational purposes among others.

The teachers of agriculture are the vehicle for successful agricultural development and innovations in the school, he/she has the responsibility of imparting knowledge and skills to the students, controls the foundation of students' skills development in agriculture for future and vital to the economic development of an agrarian society.

Unfortunately, most of the schools do not have land for school farm and competent teachers of agriculture and therefore, the subject is poorly handled. The poor handling of school farm and lack of land availability as a practical tool for skills acquisition could be as a result of lack of laboratory facilities, lack of equipment, small or no land, altitude of students toward school farm, poor funding of vocational agriculture among others (Kudari, 2016). More so, inability of the school curriculum to transmit employable skills students, lack of technical-know-how and resources to establish and manage school farm, and probably lackadaisical altitude of students pose a significant to school farm establishment.

Statement of the Problem

It is expected that on graduation, students should have possessed some skills in general agriculture both in crop production and animal husbandry to reduce unemployment rate in Nigeria. Secondary schools in LAU LGA in Taraba state roll out hundreds of fresh graduates every year without any prospect of them getting employed or self-independence, could it be that because they lack practical knowledge and skills required, or could it be probably due to unfavorable disposition or exposure of the students to farm practical, or fragmental or lack of land for school farm practices, or lack of competent teachers to teach

practical among other hindrances to effective school farm practice? However, this calls for the need to determine the influence of Vocational Agricultural School Farm on the Academic Performance of Agricultural Science Students in Lau LGA, Taraba State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the influence of Vocational Agricultural School Farm on the Academic Performance of Agricultural Science Students in Lau LGA, Taraba State. Specifically, the study sought to;

- i. Determine the extent of Vocational Agricultural School Farm on the Academic performance of Agricultural Science Students in the study area.
- ii. Determine the problems facing vocational Agricultural school farm on the Academic Performance of Agricultural Science Students in the study area.

Research Questions

Two research question questions guided the study as;

- i. To what extent does Vocational Agricultural School Farm influences academic performance of Agricultural science students in the study area?
- ii. What are the problems facing Vocational Agricultural School farm on the academic performance of Agricultural science students in the study area?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the mean responses of teachers and the non-academic staff on the influence of vocational school farm on the academic performance of agricultural students in the area

Methodology

Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The area of the study was Lau, LGA, Taraba State, Lau is the headquarters of Lau, and has five Government Day Secondary Schools. The features directly

influence the choice of crop cultivation, fishing and rearing of animals as a means for sustainable livelihood.

The population of the study comprises of all academic and non-academic staff numbering 70 in all the secondary schools in the study area. The choice of the academic and the non-academic staff was guided by the assumption that the staff are conversant with the terrain of the school, hence better understanding while the choice of the schools was based on the assumption that they are located in rural areas, hence availability of land for practical.

The sample size for the study consisted of 50 academic and 20 non-academic staff, totaled 70 staff, because of the small size, all the samples was used for the study.

The study adopted structured questionnaire, hence, it was structured to elicit information on the influence of Vocational Agricultural School Farm on the academic performance of agricultural science students in the study area.

The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation by two experts from teachers of Agricultural Science, their suggestions were used to improve on the final questionnaire.

The reliability co-efficient was 0.85, Data collected was analyzed using mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD), while the hypothesis was tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Decision Rule

Any mean of 2.50 and above signified agreed, while mean value below 2.50 indicate disagreed.

Result

The results of the study are presented as shown below in the tables; Table 1; Analysis of the Teachers and Non- Academic Staff on the Extent of Agricultural School Farm on the academic Performance of Agricultural Students.

S/N	ITEMS	\bar{x}	SD	REMARKS
1.	School farm enhances skill acquisition	3.27	1.162	Agreed
2.	School farm enhances faster learning	3.67	.547	Agreed
3.	School farm makes learning to be comprehensive,	3.50	.822	Agreed

	original and adequate			
4.	It enhances first hand experiences	3.33	.822	Agreed
5.	School farm skills makes students become Professional	3.67	.548	Agreed
6.	School farm arose student interest	3.70	.580	Agreed
7.	School farm enhances food productivity	3.35	.602	Agreed
8.	School farm brings money	3.33	.972	Agreed
9.	It brings unity of purpose	3.68	.548	Agreed
10.	School farm can assist the school	3.22	1.041	Agreed

Source: Field study 2021

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Teachers and Non-Academic Staff on the Problems Facing Agricultural School Farm Operations.

S/N	ITEMS	\bar{x}	SD	REMARKS
1.	Scarcity of land	3.32	1.164	Agreed
2.	Lack of equipment	3.79	.558	Agreed
3.	Lack of qualified teachers to teach agric science	3.41	.726	Agreed
4.	Lack of school planning	3.43	.726	Agreed
5.	School principals don't like to release money for practical	3.62	.580	Agreed
6.	Students don't like to go to farm	3.55	.572	Agreed
7.	School farm not necessary to government	3.34	.862	Agreed
8.	Community discourages school farm	3.78	.558	Agreed
9.	Lack of farm manager affect school farm	3.29	.548	Agreed
10.	School farm too far from the school	3.45	1.042	Agreed

Source: Field Survey 2021

Table 3: t-test Analysis of Opinion of Teachers and Non-academic Staff on the Extent of Agricultural School Farm on the Academic Performance of Agricultural Students

Respondents Status	Number of cases	\bar{x}	SD	t-call	Sig(2) tailed	Decision
Teachers	50	3.2951	.80.59	.590	.546	Not significant
Non-Academic	20	3.4100	.81282		.547	Not significant

Staff

It is evident from the above table that there is no significant differences

between the mean rating of teachers and non-academic staff opinion on the influence of Vocational Agricultural school Farm on the academic performance of Agricultural Students in the study areas, Hence, the t-test analysis also was not significant.

Since the study aimed at determining the influence of Vocational Agricultural School Farm on the Academic Performance of Agricultural students in the study area, based on this, the study focused on some construct which include to what extent does Vocational Agriculture School Farm influence academic performance of agricultural students and the problems facing school farm operations.

The findings from research question one and two which was shown on tables 1 and 2 shows that all the items were agreed to by the respondents with the mean ranging from 3.22-3.68 and hypothesis of not significant. This means that there is no significant difference in the opinion of the teachers and the non-academic staff on the extent and problems of Vocational Agricultural school farm on the academic performance of Agricultural students in the study area. This is because farm can enhance skill acquisition and comprehensiveness in learning. The finding is line with Melaiye, (2017), Egbule, (2002), Onwumere, (2016) and David, (2014) who observed that agriculture is a major sector of the economy that provided employment for about 70-80% of the population which is been transformed by commercialization both on the small and large scale enterprise, hence, the students should be encouraged into farming after they graduated. The study also concord with Olaitan and Mama (2001) and Kudari, (2006) who stated that the impact of economic calamity on nations depend on their level of development and effectiveness, Nigeria need people who are skilled in modern agriculture methods to handle the use of modern equipment, new techniques in seed planting, land cultivation, harvesting and storage. These people we ensure that adequate food is produced for Nigerian's increasing population.

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