

ASSESSMENT OF CAREER AWARENESS IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AMONG GRADUATES OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION IN NORTH-WEST GEOPOLITICAL ZONE, NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

This study was carried out to provide career guidance towards a brighter future of graduates of agricultural education in the north-west geopolitical zone, Nigeria. The study has three (3) specific objectives, three (3) research questions and three null hypotheses as a guide. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The target population for the study comprised of 625 graduates of agricultural education between 2005 to 2015 academic sessions from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria which is the only university in the North-west that offers and have graduates in agricultural education. A sample of 200 graduates was collected randomly. Structured questionnaire with a 4-points rating scale was used for data collection. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Relationship (PPMCR) at 0.05 levels of significance. Findings indicated that, agricultural education graduates have significant awareness about the different career opportunities in agricultural education. The findings also revealed that, agricultural education graduates are not significantly involved in careers related to agricultural education. The findings further showed that there is a significant relationship between agricultural education training and employment opportunities. It was recommended among other things that, agricultural education should be made more practical to equip graduates with all the needed skills.

Introduction

One of the social responsibilities of government the world over is to provide employment to her citizenry. However, the experience of Nigerian youths has shown that government alone cannot guarantee paid jobs to the teeming Nigerian youths. Employment opportunities as provided by Government cannot keep pace with the number of graduates joining the labour market each year. In the words of Onuegbu (2006), the rate of growth of graduates population may be described as being in geometric progression, while the growth of job opportunities have been in arithmetic progression. In an attempt to ascertain the way forward and in response to the current socio-economic problems of the country, questions were raised by various people as to what is the right education for Nigeria and what kind of education may be suitable in propelling development in the country?, so many suggestions were made in favour of refocusing the current Nigeria's education system to reflect the present realities (Akpan *et al.*, 2012). The Nigeria government is very worried on the increasing unemployment rate, poverty and generally bad economic condition in the country. Different scholars are of the opinion that vocational and technical education especially in the area of agriculture can provide the necessary remedy to the problem of unemployment (Adegbenjo, 2012).

The National Policy on Education (2004) defines technical and vocational education as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of education involving general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life. According to the policy, the goals of technical and vocational education are to:

- a. provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly craft, advanced craft and technical levels;
- b. provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development;

- c. give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be economically self-reliant. Technical and vocational education (TVE) has, since provided an approach to education and job training in modern educational systems in both developed and developing countries (Davie, 2011). The emphasis is on skill acquisition and sound scientific knowledge, which gives the ability to the use of manual dexterity and machines for the purpose of production, maintenance and self-reliance.

All economies of the world possess four essential elements, viz, land; labour; capital and entrepreneurship, though they are not evenly distributed. Igweh (2005) defined entrepreneurship as the ability to set up an enterprise as different from being employed. He reiterated that this ability involves the acquisition of skills, ideas and managerial competencies necessary for self employment. Iyekekpolor as cited in Elebe (2011) defined an entrepreneur as the originator of a new business and a new organization for that venture. Also, as the act of exhibiting the skills in starting a business with a view of making profit and that, an entrepreneur perceives opportunities which others do not. He is always searching for change, responding to it and exploiting available business opportunities. Entrepreneurship foster economic growth, increase productivity, create new technologies, products, and services and also change and rejuvenate market competition (Akunnaya, 2012). Therefore, according to Vincent (2013) the main functions of an entrepreneur include; identification of opportunity, evaluation of opportunities and choice making, decision on form of enterprise, factors combination, business directorship and risk management. Entrepreneurship development through agricultural education has been receiving attention globally. Several attempt have been made through researches, mounting of entrepreneurship courses, programs in both institutions of learning and entrepreneurship research centers for the purpose of developing both entrepreneurship spirit and culture received a lot of attention at both state and federal levels. These entrepreneurial skills can be provided through vocational and technical education especially in the area of agriculture. The main objectives of vocational agricultural education according to Okoh (2015) include to:

1. develop agricultural competence needed by individual engaged and or preparing to engage in productive agriculture;
2. ensure satisfactory placement and to advance in an agricultural occupation through a programme of continuing education;
3. develop abilities in human relations which are essential in agricultural occupation.

Okoh (2015) further identified career opportunities for agricultural education graduates to include: Careers in crop production, animal production, agricultural mechanization, agricultural products marketing, processing, ornamental agriculture, wholesale and retail trading.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, the growing problem of unemployment has contributed immensely to the worsening problem of poverty among the Nigerian populace. Unemployment leads to frustration and disillusionment, which may result in crime or drug abuse in a futile attempt to escape from and forget the pains and humiliation of poverty and lack. The problem of unemployment has worsened as millions of school leavers and graduates of tertiary institutions have not secured gainful employment over the years. In Nigeria, many able bodied and highly qualified persons who could not secure gainful employment have remained economically dependent on their parents. This is because; they lack the necessary entrepreneurial skills to be self-employed (Nwanko, 2015). These entrepreneurial skills can be provided through vocational and technical education. The threat of job scarcity and growing unemployment creates doubts and pessimism on the programs of vocational and technical schools and the education system in general. The criticism still continued in same manner that many graduates came out from university with the expectation to work for others and not for themselves. This study therefore aimed to highlight the career opportunities towards a brighter future for graduates of agricultural education so as to help them become self-reliant and make meaningful contribution to the development of their societies.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to provide career guidance towards a brighter future of graduates of agricultural education in the north-west geopolitical zone, Nigeria. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. determine the extent of career awareness among agricultural education graduates of opportunities in agricultural education;
2. assess the extent at which agricultural education graduates are involved in different careers related to agricultural education, and
3. determine the relationship between agricultural education training and employment opportunities among graduates.

Research questions

The following research questions were answered

1. What is the extent of career awareness among agricultural education graduates of opportunities in agricultural education?
2. What is the extent of involvement of agricultural education graduates in different careers related to agricultural education?
3. What is the relationship between agricultural education training and employment opportunities among graduates?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were stated to guide the study:

1. Agricultural education graduates have no significant awareness of the career opportunities in agricultural education
2. Agricultural education graduates are not significantly involved in different careers related to agricultural education
3. There is no significant relationship between agricultural education training and employment opportunities among graduates

Research Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The target population for the study comprised of 625 graduates of agricultural education between 2012 to 2015 academic sessions from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Bayero University, Kano and Kano State University for science and Technology, Wudil which started graduating agricultural education students in 2015. A sample of 200 graduates were collected using random sampling technique as recommend by Paul (2006) who suggested a sample of 200 from a population of 600 at 5% precision level. Structured questionnaire with a 4-points rating scale were used as the instrument for data collection which comprised of questions arranged systematically based on the research objectives to obtained data from the respondents in the study area. Data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics. This mean was compiled for the calculated 'Agreed' and 'Disagreed' statement (that is, Strongly Agree and Agree' represent 'agree' statements while 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' represent 'Disagreed' statements). Any variable that scored 2.5 and above was considered agreed while any item that scored below 2.5 was considered disagreed. All null hypotheses were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Relationship (PPMCR) at 0.05 levels of significance.

Results

Answers to Research Question

Research Question One: *What is the extent of career awareness among agricultural education graduates of opportunities in agricultural education?*

Table 1: Extent of career awareness among agricultural education graduates of opportunities in agricultural education

Opinion	Total Score	Mean Score	Decision Rule	Conclusion
Agree	333			Graduates are aware of different
Disagree	178	2.6	$2.6 > 2.5$	Career opportunities related to
Total	511			Agricultural education

Table 1 represents analysis of data used to answer research question one on the extent of career awareness among agricultural education graduates of opportunities in agricultural education. Items 1-10 were used to answer this research question and the result indicated that, graduates are aware of the career opportunities in agricultural education. The total score for both agreed and disagreed was 511 while the mean score was 2.6 greater than the 2.5 benchmark for agreement. This indicated that graduates are aware of most of the available career opportunities in agricultural education.

Research Question two: *What is extent of involvement of agricultural education graduates in different careers related to agricultural education?*

Table 2: Extent of involvement of agricultural education graduates in different careers related to agricultural education

Opinion	Total Score	Mean Score	Decision Rule	Conclusion
Agree	201			Most graduates are not involved
Disagree	266	2.3	$2.3 < 2.5$	In different careers related to
Total	467			Agricultural education

Result in table 2 showed that, most agricultural education graduates are not engaged in different careers related to agricultural education. This is because; the total score for both agreed and disagreed was 467 while the mean score was 2.3 less than the 2.5 bench mark for agreement. This therefore indicated that, though agricultural education graduates are aware of the career opportunities in agricultural education they are mostly not involved in such careers.

Research Question three: *What is the relationship between agricultural education training and employment opportunities among graduates?*

Table 3: Relationship between agricultural education training and employment opportunities among graduates

Opinion	Total Score	Mean Score	Decision Rule	Conclusion
Agree	339			There is relationship between
Disagree	174	2.6	$2.6 > 2.5$	Agricultural education training
Total	513			& employment opportunities

Result in Table 3 revealed that, there is a strong relationship between agricultural education training and employment opportunities among graduates in the study area. This was revealed by a calculated mean score of 2.6 which is greater than the 2.5 bench mark. This therefore showed that, there is a positive relationship between agricultural education training and employment opportunities among graduates in the study area.

Test of Hypotheses

Null hypothesis one: *Agricultural education graduates have no significant awareness about the career opportunities in agricultural education*

Table 4: PPMCR analysis on the extent of career awareness among agricultural education graduates about opportunities in agricultural education

Variables	Std.dev.	Mean	N	Df	r-cal	r-crit.	Sig (2-tailed)
Graduates' awareness	0.43	2.6	200	198	0.612	0.195	0.000
Career opportunities	0.32						

The PPMC analysis as presented in Table 4 showed that, agricultural education graduates have significant knowledge about the career opportunities in agricultural education. This was revealed by r-calculated (0.612) which was greater than r-critical (0.195) at 5% level of significance. Therefore the null hypothesis which states that, agricultural education graduates have no significant awareness about the career opportunities in agricultural education was rejected.

Null hypothesis two: *Agricultural education graduates are not significantly involved in different careers related to agricultural education*

Table 5: PPMCR analysis on the extent of involvement of agricultural education graduates in different careers related to agricultural education

Variables	Std.dev.	Mean	N	Df	r-cal	r-crit.	Sig (2-tailed)
Extent of grad.involv.	0.61	2.3	200	198	0.164	0.195	0.000
Career opportunities	0.53						

The PPMC analysis in table 5 indicated that, agricultural education graduates are not significantly involved in different careers related to agricultural education. The computation of PPMC analysis revealed that, r-calculated (0.164) was less than r-critical (0.195) at 5% level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that, agricultural education graduates are not significantly involved in different careers related to agricultural education, was retained.

Null hypothesis three: *There is no significant relationship between agricultural education training and employment opportunities among graduates*

Table 6: PPMCR analysis on the relationship between agricultural education training and employment opportunities among graduates

Variables	Std.dev.	Mean	N	Df	r-cal	r-crit.	Sig (2-tailed)
Agric edu.training	0.24	2.6	200	198	0.581	0.195	0.000
Career opportunities	0.32						

The result of PPMC analysis as presented in table 6 revealed a strong relationship between agricultural education training and employment opportunities among graduates in the study area. The computation showed that, r-calculated (0.581) was greater than r-critical (0.195) at 5% level of significance. Therefore the null hypothesis which states that, there is no significant relationship between agricultural education training and employment opportunities among graduates was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

One of the results of this study indicated that, graduates are aware of the career opportunities in agricultural education. This finding was presented on Tables 1 and 4. From table 1, the total score for both agree and disagree was 511 while the mean score was 2.6 greater than the 2.5 bench mark for agreement. This indicated that graduates are aware of most of the available career opportunities in agricultural education. Table 4 further revealed that, r-calculated (0.612) was greater than r-critical (0.195) at 5% level of significance indicating that, agricultural education graduates have a significant awareness of the career opportunities embedded in agricultural education. This is in agreement with finding of Akunnaya (2012) who maintained that, agricultural education graduates are aware of the major career opportunities in agriculture related enterprises. Akpan (2011) further pointed out that, career opportunities in agriculture are numerous and practicable.

Another finding of this study also showed that, most agricultural education graduates are not engaged in different careers related to agricultural education. This was contained in Tables 2 and 5. This is because;

the total score for both agree and disagree as presented in Table 2 was 467 while the mean score was 2.3 less than the 2.5 bench mark for agreement. The PPMC analysis in Table 4 further showed that, r-calculated (0.612) was greater than r-critical (0.195) at 5% level of significance. This is in line with the finding of Davie (2011) who reported that, most agricultural education graduates though aware of most opportunities in the field may lack the willingness to utilize them. Onuegbu (2006) further suggested that, majority of educated that practice agricultural production at different capacities have no agricultural education background.

The result of this study further revealed that, there is a strong relationship between agricultural education training and employment opportunities among graduates in the study area. This was revealed by the analysis in table 3 where a calculated mean score of 2.6 greater than the 2.5 bench mark and the PPMC analysis in Table 6 showed that, r-calculated (0.581) was greater than r-critical (0.195) at 5% level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that, there is no significant relationship between agricultural education training and employment opportunities among graduates was not retained. This is in line with Ibiok (2008) who suggested that, agricultural education is a double-edged sword, which means it prepares individuals as trained agriculturists and as agricultural educators.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study concludes that Agricultural education graduates are aware of the available career opportunities in agricultural education, do not actively participate in agriculture related career and there exit a strong relationship between agricultural education training and employment opportunities among agricultural education graduates. It is therefore recommended that agricultural education curriculum should be practically oriented to equip graduates with the requisite skill and attitude to take career in agriculture related career and agricultural education instructors should be able to motivate graduates to see agriculture as a profitable business enterprise. It also recommended that agricultural education graduates should be made to understand and accept Agricultural education as a business venture that can be practiced at any scale.

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