The Role of Vocational Agricultural Education in National Development

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(Received: January 28, 2016 and Accepted February 25, 2016)

Abstract

The trust of this paper is on re-appraising vocational agricultural education for national development. It points out the strict relationship between vocational agricultural education and national development and affirms the extent to which instruction of this aspect of education can be more effective to enhance change to desirable behaviour, attitude, skills, knowledge and value acquisition that have positive impact on national development. The role of vocational agricultural education in national development and problems militating against realizing the objectives were highlighted. Recommendations were made that there should be proper funding of the vocational programme by the government at all levels. Increased funding on the part of the government will be needed to solve the problems of tools and equipment as well as infrastructures to create the enabling environment of the production of capable work force in vocational agriculture. Also, only
qualified teachers should be employed for vocational agricultural education and finally, there is need to adjust our educational system to help individuals and society in general to acquire knowledge that has value and consequently impart on national development. We need to do that because we owe this nation role to play.

**Keywords:** Vocational Education, Agriculture and National Development

**Introduction**

Education is generally viewed as innovative process, which improved individuals’ skills, knowledge, habits and attitude in the society. The search for appropriate skills and competencies is acquired through training. Hence agricultural education is an aspect of education that leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge (National Policy on Education, 2004). It also describes vocational agricultural education as education that leads individual directly to a particular function in a society; which is to be employed in job trade or private occupations.

Vocational education is any form of education designed to imbue individual with the right type of knowledge, skill, competencies and attitudes for specific occupations (Nwankwo, 2000). Those who undergo vocational education are assumed to have already chosen their life occupations and thus need all necessary trainings to acquire relevant skills and knowledge to enable them progress and develop in such occupations.

Vocational agricultural education is concerned with the development of skills; knowledge and attitude in the field of agriculture to enable the recipients take up a career in it. It is responsible for preparing individuals in
various agricultural occupations such as those concerned with growing crops, rearing animals, providing ornamental horticulture, managing farm business and managing farm resources (Ezeagu and Ezema, 2004).

According to Dipcharima (2004), vocational agricultural education assists and provides the individuals or the society with basic or essential agricultural knowledge and skills to innovate and explore the environment for the betterment of the whole society or nation. Vocational agricultural skills are necessary for economic, agricultural, commercial growth and by implication national development. It is a sure way of guaranteeing national development.

The vocational agricultural education deals with the skills necessary for ensuring high-level production of farm products and produce. The use of modern techniques in the area of agricultural mechanization, application of fertilizer and management must clearly be demonstrated and encapsulated within the curriculum of secondary and tertiary institutional so as to enable the students develop interest and acquire vocational skills (Agbulu and Ekele, 2004).

**Objectives of Vocational Agricultural Education**

According to Ukpongson and Mangiri (2000) and Ekong (2007), these objectives include:

- To develop competencies in the broad and highly scientific agriculture and encompasses production, processing, distribution, sales and services, national resources and conservation, agricultural mechanics or other careers in agriculture.
- To develop an understanding and appreciation of career opportunities in agriculture and of the preparations needed to
progress in production agriculture, agricultural business occupation, or other careers in agriculture.

- To develop the ability to secure satisfaction in placement and to advance in an agricultural occupation through a programme of continuing education.
- To develop those abilities in human relations which are essential in agricultural occupation
- To develop leadership, character, thrifts, scholarship, cooperation, citizenship and patriotism by participating in experiences and activities of agricultural programmes.
- To develop agricultural competences needed by individuals engaged in or preparing to engage in production agriculture.

**Concept of National Development**

National development has been defined differently by different authors. According to Peters (2006), National development is the growth in income per capital of a country which is dependent on the gross national product. He also stressed that national development is the provision and creation of conditions by which the citizens of a nation attain the fulfillment of their basic human need. The basic idea of national development is growth in human and materials resources of a nation.

Odukwe (1990) also perceived National development in terms of the absolute structural transformation of the social, economic, political, cultural, scientific, and educational set up of a nation. It can also be seen as a progress towards reducing the incident of poverty, unemployment and income inequality in the society.

National Development involves improving the environment in a country with a view to better the quality of life of the citizens of that country.
National development is a conscious and holistic effort towards economic, political and social development of a country.

The Role of Vocational Agricultural Education in National Development

Vocational agricultural education plays important roles to enhance national development and this necessitate its reappraisal towards improving the national economy. The role of vocational agricultural education in national development can be summarized in accordance with Ukpungson and Mangiri (2000) and the National policy on Education (2004), as follows:

i. The development of machinery and other equipment like tractor ridger, planter, and combined harvester to replace the old tools like hoe and cutlass.

ii. Vocational agricultural education is a motivating force; just as a university bound students are motivated by the fact that the occupation (profession) of their choice requires a university education and universities have certain admission requirements, so employment-bound youth in high schools/technical colleges can be challenged by the occupation of their choice, the job entry requirements.

iii. Vocational agricultural education may help in producing nutritionist who could help in developing different types of foodstuffs for animals and chemical like fertilizers for plants.

iv. Vocational agricultural education help to produce building engineers to develop farm buildings like pens for livestock, pens for poultry and pig silos, cribs for storage and even construction of dams to supply water and electricity.
v. Vocational agricultural education helps in the development of modem methods of processing plant and animal products like shelling and canning.

vi. To provide technical knowledge and vocational skill for Agriculture, industrial, commercial and economic development.

vii. To produce people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environment and such as pest and disease, erosion degradation, pollution etc, for the use and convenience of man.

viii. To enable our young men and women to develop an intellectual understanding of the increasing complexity of problem limiting farm production.

ix. To give training and impart the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsman, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant.

x. Vocational agricultural education is instrumental to a buoyant modem economy as it requires for rapid growth and development, skilled manpower in agriculture and food production, building, business, catering, design/construction, commerce, energy, manufacturing and water supply.

Problems of Vocational Agricultural Education

These challenges are:

i. Problem of Qualified manpower, which appears to be so grave. Perhaps, hinging on the fact that no educational system can rise above the caliber of its teachers, no educational policy, no
matter how well planned can succeed without the supply of the right quality and quantity of teachers.

ii. Low funding is now mere platitude to say that the most past civilian regimes in Nigeria over the years have not shown enough concern to the educational sector. Most educational institutions in the country including the technical and vocational institutions have been plaque and comatose by the never ending problem of inadequate funding even to the point that meeting basic operating costs becomes difficult.

iii. Inadequate equipment and tools is another area where vocational agricultural education suffers a lot and adequate grounding of learners in the skills becomes unrealizable. Perhaps, this is one reason why (Nwankwo, 2000) asserted that the skill content of our current technical education is insufficient. While there is increase in number of schools established, there is no proportionate increase in provision of equipment and tools necessary for effective teaching.

iv. Societal Attitude towards vocational agricultural education is a problem which has led to the belief among many people that vocational agricultural education is meant for those who do not have the brain power for vigorous academic demands of the traditional secondary schools’ system. To those who hold this view and belief, they think that the technical school leavers are drop-outs or never do wells that can only learn skills for vocation (Olaitan, 1994).

v. Over-populated classes are another problem facing vocational agricultural education in Nigeria. Disadvantage of over-population classes are devastating; they deny the students the opportunity of gaining practical experience. Also, the equipment
is often over-stretched in use and so, soon they become old and worn-out. Over-populated classes drastically reduce the chance for good teacher-student interaction; a necessity for good learning.

**Conclusion**

The reappraisal of vocational agricultural education can rightly be said to be tremendous to national development, especially when properly combined with other branches of education since the programme emphasizes theory, practical and skill acquisition. Vocational agricultural education is an innovative programme that brings about changes in the society and self-reliant reducing unemployment in the country. The impact of vocational agricultural education on national development is overwhelming since it has the tendency of developing interest among all people, especially adult. As they are actively involved in the programme, both in and out of school, it keeps them out of mischief. Through the programme also, an individual can be self-sustained and self-employed.

**Recommendations**

1. There should be proper funding of the vocational programme by the government at all levels.
2. Only examined and qualified teachers should be employed for vocational agricultural education.
3. Increased funding on the part of the government will be needed to solve the problems of tools and equipment as well as infrastructures to create the enabling environment of the production of capable work force in vocational agriculture.
4. There is need to create more awareness in terms of enlightenment campaigns via intensified use of mass media on the importance of vocational agricultural education in any nation’s technological advancement. By so doing, more people would come to appreciate vocational agricultural education as a veritable technological life-wire of our desired match towards technological breakthrough and by extension; there would be a change in societal negative attitude towards it and its products.

5. There is need to adjust our educational system to help individuals and society in general to acquire knowledge that has value and consequently impart on national development. We need to do that because we owe this nation role to play.

6. The public are bias of vocational subjects. The government should make it a duty to remove this bias and give vocational education a higher priority. This is because vocational education is important in depressed economy such as ours.

References


