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Assessment of the Preparedness for Self-Employment among Agricultural Education Students in Colleges of Education in Kogi State

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Abstract: *The study was designed to assess the extent of preparedness for self-employment among Agricultural Education students in Colleges of Education in Kogi state. Three specific objectives and research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted and the population for the study was 112 students consisting of 62 agricultural education students in federal and 50 agricultural education from the student's state colleges of education in Kogi State out of which 66 students were sampled using simple random sampling technique. The instrument data collection was Assessment of the Preparedness for Self-Employment among Agricultural Education Students (APSEAES). Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics precisely mean and standard deviation to answer research questions. The findings revealed that Agricultural Education Students in Colleges of Education are not adequately prepared for self-employment and some factors that hindered preparation for self-employment among Agricultural Education Students in Colleges of Education in Kogi State. Base on the findings it was concluded that the preparation for self-employment among agricultural education students in colleges of education is currently inadequate, as most students have limited exposure to real-life agricultural practices. It recommended among others that a holistic approach involving curriculum reform, practical exposure, mentorship, financial support and government policy backing be adopted to address inadequate preparation for self-employment among Agricultural Education Students in Colleges of Education.*

Keywords: Preparedness, Self-employment, Agricultural Education Students

Introduction

Education is considered as a powerful tool for empowering the youth with skills and knowledge essential for personal and societal development. Long before now, education in Nigeria has been shaped to prepare graduates for paid employment which was mostly white-collar jobs (Anyakha, 2013). In the past, would-be-graduates were interviewed and offered employment before graduation. According to Okoh (2015), employers of labour in the 70s, 80s and early 90s in Nigeria go to tertiary institutions to recruit students in their final years in schools. Today, it is no longer so, as employment opportunities have dried up most especially for graduate of colleges of education.

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A College of Education, according to National Policy on Education of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) is a tertiary institution that offers three years minimum training to students in many programmes of interest for entry into the teaching profession. That is, it prepares teachers for three years in programmes like integrated science, home economics, business education and agricultural education which is the focus of this study.

Agricultural Education as described by Ukonze and Olaitan (2010) is a programme designed for preparing or equipping learners with knowledge, skills and attitude in teaching and technical areas of agriculture to enable them impart the same to students in schools and colleges. Ifeanyieze (2011) stated that agricultural education involves the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes in agriculture and teaching by would be teachers in recognized universities or other higher institutions. It targets producing teachers and improving the quality of life for all people by helping farmers increase production, conserve resources and provide nutritious foods. Agricultural Education, in this context, is a programme in Colleges of Education designed to produce teachers that are competent in teaching content areas of agriculture to students in Junior Secondary Schools. The objectives of Agricultural Education in Colleges of Education are to:

- prepare graduates with right attitudes and knowledge/professional competence in vocational agriculture;
- produce teachers who will be capable of motivating students to acquire interest in and aptitude for agriculture;
- develop in the student teachers the appropriate communication skills for effective transmission of agricultural information and skills to the students in the context of their environment;
- equip the student teachers with adequate knowledge and ability to establish and manage a model school farm effectively and
- provide a sound background to enhance further academic and professional progression of the student teachers. (National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), Minimum Standard, 2009:16).

Ademu (2017) asserted that the primary purposes of agricultural education at all levels are to prepare individuals for gainful employment, whether paid or self-employment. According to Agbulu, Asogwa, and Ekele (2013), because of the reduction in formal employment opportunities, self-employment is a realistic option for many agricultural education students who could end up establishing their own businesses. Preparing agricultural education students for self-employment is essential due to rising unemployment and the limited availability of white-collar jobs. Therefore, the Skills offered in Agricultural Education are meant to address the situation, whereby students remain unemployed for many years after graduation. In the face of rising unemployment and economic instability in Nigeria, self-employment is considered a significant source of new jobs and an alternative to salaried employment (Emmanuel, 2023). In the agricultural sector, self-employment has gained recognition over the years and is well appreciated among higher education students and agricultural practitioners due to the unavailability of conventional employment and the increasing number of unemployed graduates. Mustapha (2019) opined that an individual is said to be self-employed, he or she must possess relevant and adequate skills needed for self-employment through vocational skills acquisition. Equipping students with skills for self-employment ensures that agricultural education remains relevant, practical, and

impact in today's economy. Lesaane and Akintunde (2020) observed that, the growing dependence of agricultural education graduates on white- collar jobs, which are difficult to come by, and urged students to seek self-employment through skills acquisition. The reduction in formal employment opportunities, self-employment is a realistic option for many agricultural education students who could end up establishing their own businesses. Similarly, several authors attributed this situation to several factors, among others, including the lack of students adequately trained in agriculture to take up farming as a career (Afande, 2015; Haji, 2015; and Maluleka, 2021).

Raymond, Muhammed, and Ajunwa (2015) lamented students' poor attitude to self-employment in Nigeria. Ezeh and Juniadu (2019) opined that there is a noticeable absence of effective mentorship programmes or partnerships with agro-businesses that can facilitate practical learning and business startup. Similarly, Danjuma (2021) remarked that many institutions face challenges such as underfunded laboratories and school farms, limited access to farmland, outdated curriculum content, and a lack of modern agricultural tools and equipment.

Koku and Patience (2022) opined that one of the factors responsible for unemployment in Nigeria is the high turn-out of graduates from tertiary institutions with no equivalent job provision to take care of them. Self-employment is a means by which an individual works for himself or herself instead of working for an employer that pays salary or wages. According to Danjuma (2021), self-employment is an instance where individuals, rather than being hired workers, choose to work for themselves. In the same way, Ugbe (2024) considered self-employment as work which wages depend directly on the gains from goods produced or services provided where the self-employed person personally makes decisions that influences the business. It involves creating and running a small venture as a means of getting a decent living. The acquisition of relevant vocational skills in agriculture is generally considered as a significant step in achieving self-reliance through agricultural education programme.

In view of Wombo and Igbabaka (2019), many factors may affect individual students' decision to be self-employed in agriculture; problems of poor skills acquisition, misconceptions about occupations, and the low social perception of agriculture-related jobs appear foremost, and this calls for proper vocational guidance and counseling services. Equally, while many students express interest in self-employment, this interest is not always backed by adequate preparation or realistic planning. Therefore, there is a need to link agricultural education to self-employment and job creation to alleviate the problem of unemployment and underemployment of agricultural education graduates. The problem of this study is how prepared are agricultural education students in colleges of education in Kogi State to become self-employed upon graduation.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study was to assess the preparedness for self-employment among agricultural education students in colleges of education in Kogi State. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. determine the attitude to self-employment among agricultural education students in colleges of education in Kogi State.
2. examine the level of preparedness in occupational areas of agriculture among agricultural education students in Colleges of Education in Kogi State and
3. identify factors that hinder the preparation for self-employment among agricultural education students in colleges of education in Kogi State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the attitude of agricultural education students regarding self-employment among agricultural education students in colleges of education in Kogi State?
2. What is the level of preparedness in occupational areas of agriculture among agricultural education students in colleges of education in Kogi State?
3. What are the factors that hinder preparation for self-employment among agricultural education students in colleges of education in Kogi State?

Methodology

This study was conducted in Kogi State, Nigeria. It adopted a descriptive research design. The total population for the study was 112, consisting of 62 agricultural education students in the Federal College of Education and 50 agricultural education students from the State College of Education in Kogi State. The sample size of 66 was drawn from the population using a simple random sampling technique. The instrument data collection was Assessment of the Preparedness for Self-Employment among Agricultural Education Students (APSEAES) developed by the researche. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts, two from the Department of Agricultural Education and one from the Entrepreneurship Development Centre, all in Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa. The instrument was also subjected to a reliability test through the test-retest method using 20 selected Agricultural Education students outside the population under study. The second test was given after two weeks. A Correlation Coefficient (r) of 0.82 was obtained using the Spearman Rank Order correlation coefficient and was adjudged to be quite reliable. Sixty-six copies of the instrument were distributed and retrieved by the researcher and one research assistant trained by the researcher.The data generated was analyzed using descriptive statistics precisely mean mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. Any item with a mean rating that was equal to or more than 2.50 was regarded as Agree; otherwise, it was Disagree. The benchmark of 2.5 is simply the mean average of the value assigned to the four response options, which are $4+3+2+1=10\div4=2.50$.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the attitude to self-employment among agricultural education students in colleges of education in Kogi State?

Table 1: Mean Responses on the Attitude to Self-Employment among Agricultural Education Students in Colleges of Education in Kogi State

S/N	Statement	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1	Self-employment is an easy way to fight unemployment and poverty	3.80	0.46	Agreed
2	Self-employment in agriculture is a gold mine for young entrepreneur	3.85	0.81	Agreed
3	It has good future for the country	3.52	0.82	Agreed
4	It is lucrative	4.0	1.74	Agreed
5	It is attractive and decent	3.51	0.92	Agreed
6	It is profitable for income generation	3.60	0.95	Agreed
7	It is a job for schools drop out and illiterates	2.20	1.28	Disagreed
8	It is a carrier for young and old people	4.30	1.34	Agreed
9	It enhances personal status and self-esteem	3.65	1.68	Agreed
10	It is highly risky to be self-employed in agriculture	2.00	1.12	Disagreed
11	Being self-employed in agriculture would give me great satisfaction	3.75	0.58	Agreed
12	Agricultural ventures serves as self-reliance strategy for agricultural educations students	4.20	0.89	Agreed

$\bar{X}$ =Mean and SD=Standard Deviation

Table 1 showed that 10 items had their items 1,2,8,4,5,8,9,11 and 12 falls in the category of strongly agreed. This implies that agricultural education students in colleges of education in Kogi State have a positive attitude toward self-employment after graduation. However, items 7 and 10 have mean scores of 2.20 and 2.10, which were within the boundary of the limit for disagreement. This means that self-employment in agriculture is not considered a job for school dropouts and illiterates, and is not highly risky. The table further revealed the grand mean, which is within the boundary limit of strongly agree, implying that all the items in the table indicated that agricultural education students in colleges of education in Kogi State have a positive attitude toward self-employment in agriculture after graduation. This is supported by the standard deviations on each of the items as well as the overall standard deviation, which shows the similarity of the opinions of the respondents.

Research Question 2: What is the extent of preparedness in occupational areas of agriculture for self-employment among agricultural education students?

Table 2: Mean Responses on the Extent of Preparedness in Occupational Areas of Agriculture for Self-Employment among Agricultural Education Students

S/N	Occupational Areas	X	SD	Remarks
	a) Crop production			
1	Vegetable production	3.14	1.14	Agreed
2	Fruits production	1.86	1.40	Disagreed
3	Floriculture	2.09	0.89	Disagreed
4	Arable crop production	3.32	1.52	Agreed
5	Plantation farming	2.15	1.15	Disagreed
	b) Animal production			
6	poultry production	3.50	1.20	Agreed
7	Piggery	1.65	1.40	Disagreed
8	Rabitry	2.86	1.2	Agreed
9	Goatry	2.60	0.94	Agreed
10	Fishery	2.60	0.77	Agreed
11	Grass cutter Rearing	1.62	1.08	Disagreed
12	Cattle Rearing	1.62	1.42	Disagreed
13	Hatchery & Brooding ventures	2.20	1.11	Disagreed
	c) Agricultural Mechanization			
14	Coupling and use of tractor implements	2.00	1.43	Disagreed
15	Products processing ventures	2.00	1.12	Disagreed
	d) Agricultural Extension services			
16	Agricultural consultancy services	2.42	1.13	Disagreed
17	Organizing and supervising farmers groups	2.28	1.18	Disagreed
18	Conducting and organizing training for farmers	2.28	1.18	Disagreed
19	Planting and executing agricultural programme	2.35	1.12	Disagreed
20	Evaluating extension programmes	2.40	1.17	Disagreed

$\bar{X}$ =Mean and SD=Standard Deviation

Table 2 showed that six items (1, 4, 6, 8, 9 and 10) had their mean scores ranging from 2.60 to 3.50 which were within the boundary of limit for agreement. This implies that agricultural education students are being prepared in vegetable production, Arable production, poultry production, Rabittory, Goatry and fishery occupational areas while items 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 12, 1, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 had their scores ranging from 1.62 to 2.42 which were within the boundary limit for Disagreed. This implies that agricultural education students were not prepared for self-employment in most of the occupational areas of agriculture. The table further revealed the grand mean, which is within the boundary limit for Disagreed, implying that all the items in the table indicate that students were not prepared for self-employment after graduation.

Research Question 3: What are the factors that hinder preparation for self-employment among agricultural education students in colleges of education in Kogi State?

Table 3: Mean Responses of the Respondents on the Factors that Hinder- Preparation for Self-Employment among Agricultural Education Students

S/N	Occupational Areas	X	SD	Remarks
1	Poor orientation bout agricultural education	2.86	2,12	Agreed
2	Theoretical based curriculum that do not provide practical application of the knowledge gained in classrooms	4.22	1.67	Agreed
3	Absence of skill and competency based assessment model	4.20	1.67	Agreed
4	Insufficient personnel to guide the students during practical	3.60	1.99	Agreed
5	Practical not usually evaluated	3.60	2.01	Agreed
6	Inadequate incentive measures to encourage students that perform	3.88	1.76	Agreed
7	Poor learning environment and facilities	3.68	1.58	Agreed
8	Non availability/Epileptic power supply	4.20	1.67	Agreed
9	Lecturers lack of enthusiasm and support for acquisition of self-employment skills	2.50	0.98	Agreed
10	Insufficient land in the school farm for practical activities	3.60	2.01	Agreed
11	Use of crude farm tools	4.20	1.67	Agreed
12	Too much emphasis and use of lecture method in teaching agricultural courses	4.20	1.67	Agreed

$\bar{X}$ =Mean and SD=Standard Deviation

The data in Table 3 revealed that all 12 items had their mean scores ranging from 2.50 to 4.22, which is within the boundary limit of high agreement. This implies that all the items mentioned are the factors that hinder preparation for self-employment among agricultural education students in colleges of education. The table further revealed the grand mean, which is within the boundary limit for agreement, implying that all the items hinder preparation for self-employment among agricultural education students. This is supported by the standard deviations and each of the items, which range from 0.98 to 2.12, showing the similarity to the opinion of the respondents.

Discussion

The result of the findings on research question one revealed that agricultural education students in colleges of education in Kogi State have a positive attitude toward self-employment in agriculture after graduation. This is because the majority of students believe in becoming self-employed in agriculture, and they see it as a possibility for both young and old people. This finding was in disagreement with Raymond, Muhammed, and Ajunwa (2015) in a study on students' attitudes towards self-employment in electronics occupational areas in Niger and Benue States. Towards self-employment in the electronics occupation is not good enough; consequently, if students are prepared and trained in the occupational areas of agriculture, there would be self-employment after graduation.

The findings on research question two revealed that agricultural education students in colleges of education are not adequately prepared for self-employment. Little preparation is only done in a few occupational areas of agriculture: vegetable production, arable crop production, poultry production, rabbitry, goatry, and fishery. Other occupational areas of agriculture, such as fruit production, floriculture, plantation farming, piggery, grass cutter rearing, cattle rearing, hatchery, and brooding ventures, were not given serious attention. This finding confirms the position of Idoko (2018) that entrepreneurial activities in agricultural education in Nigerian schools are restricted to the traditional areas of crop and animal production, while other numerous innovative ventures, such as crop and animal products processing, dry season gardening, snail farming, bee farming, and other micro livestock farming, are silent. The more agro ventures are on the school farms, the more preparation and skills that will be acquired by the graduates during their training. This finding, therefore, indicated the need to have numerous agro ventures on the school farms for the preparation of students for employment in occupational areas of agriculture. Therefore, agro–ventures such as vegetable production, arable crops, poultry, rabbitry, goatry, and fisher production that have a mean of 2.5 and above will have to be sustained, and the ventures that have a mean less than 2.5 deserve urgent attention to foster agro business skills acquisition in agricultural education for self-employment in occupational areas of agriculture.

The findings of the study on Research Question Three revealed some factors that hindered the preparation of students for self-employment in agricultural education. It was found that poor orientation about agricultural education, a theoretically based curriculum, the absence of a skill-based assessment model, insufficient personnel to guide students during practical, and the fact that practical work is not usually evaluated by teachers are some of the hindrances to the preparation of students for self-employment. Others are: inadequate incentive measures to encourage students who perform well in practical, poor learning environment and facilities, non-availability of power supply, use of crude farm tools, insufficient land in the school, and too much emphasis on the lecture method in teaching agricultural courses. These findings were in line with Raymond, Muhammed, and Ajunwa (2015) in a study on students' attitudes towards self-employment in electronics occupational areas in Niger and Benue States, whose findings revealed that studies for self-employment are affected by such factors.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that the preparation for self-employment among agricultural education students in colleges of education is currently inadequate, as most students have limited exposure to real-life agricultural practices. While entrepreneurship in agricultural education is recognized as essential, actual readiness among agricultural education students is notably low. Though there is a foundation of knowledge, the lack of practical experience, deep entrepreneurial training in the various occupational areas of agriculture, support mechanisms, and limited confidence stemming from poor exposure and resource will limit their ability to effectively start and sustain agro-businesses. Many studies have reported the poor perception of the students on career options and enterprises in agriculture. However, an understanding of the factors that influence this perception will assist in promoting a highly positive perception of agricultural entrepreneurship. Knowledge of the factors that could motivate them towards agriculture will assist in planning and implementing agricultural education programmes.

Recommendations

- School administrators and lecturers should organize Youths Organization in Agriculture beyond payment of dues and organizing send-forth for out-going members to activities that will contribute to skills acquisition in the school. This will promote interest in agricultural entrepreneurship and a positive attitude towards self-employment.
- To address inadequate preparedness for self-employment among agricultural education students in colleges of education, there must be a holistic approach involving curriculum reform, practical exposure, mentorship, financial support, and government policy backing.
- School administrators should be more responsive to the requirements of the agricultural education programme by providing adequate material and human resources for effective implementation.
- In addition, focus should be shifted to competence and performance-based assessment through agro-business establishment and management as stipulated in the minimum standard.

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