



Public Policy: Introduction of Agriculture Catch Them Young Programs in Public Schools for Enhancement of Agriculture Development

Sule Abiodun

Research Scholar, Niomr Research Lagos, Nigeria

Abstract

Agriculture does not only feed the nation, but serves as a major source of export to the nation. In Nigeria, many youths are no longer interested in agriculture thus leaving the burden to the aged who barely grow enough food for their family. Consequently, this study is working on the premise that introducing operation 'catch them young' programs in public school will revamp the interest of the youths on agriculture. This study adopted a descriptive survey involving 200 students and 100 teachers selected from some public secondary schools within Surulere L.G.A in Lagos State using convenient sampling technique. All data collected were subject to descriptive analysis and the result indicated that introduction of agriculture catch them young programs in public schools will go a long way for enhancing agricultural development. Based on this result, the study recommends the implementation of agricultural activities in the school curriculum to orientate the students on the importance and various aspects of agriculture will indirectly influence their choice of career.

Keywords: Public policy, agriculture, catch them young, programs, public schools, agriculture development

1 Introduction

The Nigerian agriculture sector has the capacity of employing millions of people, given its lucrative nature, however agriculture development is confronted by two main challenges; promotion of a stable environment and improvement in food production (Haruna, Asogwa&Ezhim, 2019). Of recent, there has been a rise in the cost of agricultural produce, and some of the factors that influenced this rise include the lack of interest and poor orientation displayed towards agriculture. Agriculture is perceived to be less lucrative than other sectors, such as oil and ICT, which is a direct influence on the choice of career of youths. Consequently, there is a dwindle in the number of people who consciously embrace agriculture and make a career of it leading to low level of agriculture development in the country, as well as inadequate local food production (Mbah, Amah &Onwusika, 2017).

Given the growing disinterest of youth in agricultural activities, a solution has to be proffered in order to salvage the future of agriculture in the country. A proposed solution is the implementation of a programme or policy targeted at raising awareness and agricultural orientation at primary and secondary school level of education. The idea behind this programme is the fact that young people are fast learners and open to new innovations, so rather than trying to use an adult to drive positive change towards agriculture development, young ones at school level should be encouraged to be agents of change and a form of influence in creating a shift from conventional methods to modern techniques. In essence, nurturing the passion of young Nigerians towards productive agricultural activities will develop Nigeria through agriculture generally.

The successful involvement of young ones in the agricultural sector requires access to education and information on finance and markets to boost their knowledge of agricultural production and various processing techniques, as well as enable them to be taught practical application. The

challenge foreseen in the implementation of this programme in developing countries such as Nigeria is the inadequate access to quality education and training in most rural areas. This paper is focused on examining how formulating a Policy aimed at the introduction of Agriculture catch them young programs in Public Schools can enhance Agriculture development.

2 Statement of the problem

Enough emphasis cannot be laid on the participation of young ones in agricultural development as a means of enhancing food security in Nigeria. The rationale behind this stems from the possible threat of a bleak future in agriculture in most developing countries given the low level in the production of agricultural produce. At present the bulk of agricultural production efforts rest on the aged farming population, most of whom Adekunle, Adefalu, Oladipo, Adisa and Fatoye (2009) observed to be uneducated. Therefore, advocating for a policy that encourages and empowers young ones at secondary school level is based on their capacity to serve as change agents in the society. However, most agricultural practitioners are located in rural locations and deprived of basic social infrastructures such as schools, which is a danger in itself as the academic and agricultural career of children is threatened (Njeru, 2017; Paisley, 2014). Majority of agricultural practitioners tend to adopt outdated or dangerous production practises that endanger the environment in the area of excessive chemical use in disease and pest control (Ogboru&Anga, 2015). If the current agricultural situation in Nigeria is not properly addressed through the inclusion of young ones at secondary school level into agricultural programmes to groom their interest and serve as agents of change, then ensuring a sustainable food security in the country will become abstract. It is expected of youths to stand in the gap, but they are increasingly adopting nonagricultural careers (World Farmers' Organization, 2017). The entrepreneurial and innovative energy possessed by young people can help enhance agricultural sector, but they are hindered by their poor orientation and lack of interest in agricultural development. It is hoped that educating them from an early stage will enable them view agriculture as a rewarding career given the right education, training and resources. To this end, this paper examines the extent to which introducing Agriculture catch them young programs in Public Schools can enhance Agriculture development.

3 Research objectives

1. Determine the factors hindering the adoption of agricultural career among youths in Nigeria.
2. Determine the extent to which the introduction of agriculture catches them young programs in Public Schools can enhance agricultural development.

4 Research questions

1. What are the factors hindering the adoption of agricultural career among youths in Nigeria?
2. To what extent would the introduction of agriculture catch them young programs in Public Schools enhance agricultural development?

5 Literature review

Overview of agriculture sector in Nigeria

A growing population means experiencing food challenges, as meeting the needs of the population requires the extensive use resources within the environment. In the bid to stabilise agriculture in Nigeria the Federal Government tasked teachers of agricultural science at the senior level to create awareness and sensitize the students on the advantages of embracing agriculture as a reliable form of sustaining economic growth for national development (Egba, 2016). Engaging the youths in agricultural activities could impact on agricultural development and ensure food security (Njeru, 2017). In view of this, emphasis has been laid on the significance of implementing agricultural activities in the school curriculum to orientate the students on the importance and various aspects of agriculture, and indirectly influencing their choice of career (Njeru, Gichimu, Lopokoiyit and Mwangi, 2015). According to Girei, Saingbe, Ohen and Gimba (2017), the participation of youths in agricultural programs enables them to possess the required energy and knowledge to function effectively, coupled with their ability to learn fast and utilize modern technologies. Otegunrin, Otegunrin and Oni (2019) pointed out that educational policy reviews and reforms recommended that agriculture should be integrated at both primary and secondary levels in order to enhance their learning experiences. Furthermore, Otegunrin et al.

(2019) observed that in view of the policy, new subjects have been introduced into the school curriculum as elective subjects. The skills and knowledge derived from this would influence them to be self-sufficient.

6 Empirical review

Haruna, Asogwa and Ezhim (2019) investigated the challenges hindering youths from participating in agricultural education. Using the survey method, questionnaire was used for data collection distributed to two hundred and forty tertiary students selected randomly from institutions in North Central Nigeria. Data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. It was found that the inclusion of agricultural education in the school curriculum enabled the students to be familiar with agricultural studies, as well as influenced their participation in the sustainability of agricultural products. Adesina and Eforuoku (2016) assessed the factors that determined the involvement of youth in agricultural programmes in Ondo state, Nigeria. The study found that majority of the youth had a form of formal education that influenced the adoption of agricultural technologies, implying that formal agricultural education was essential in agricultural development. Akinwekomi, Obayelu and Afolabi (2017) examined the factors influencing the decision of youths to participate in agribusiness in Ogun State, Nigeria. Using Multi-stage sampling, eighty respondents were selected as respondents, while data was collected using structured questionnaire. Descriptive and logit regression model were used in the data analysis. The study found that most of the respondents were engaged in various aspects of agricultural production because of the availability of incentives which served as a form of motivation to them. The constraint identified by the study was tedious and unattractive nature of agribusiness enterprises.

6 Methodology

The paper adopted the descriptive survey in conducting this study. The population of study comprised of teachers and students of public secondary schools in Lagos state. Ten public schools were purposively selected from two local governments; Surulere and AjeromiIfelodun local governments both located in Lagos state. From each of these local governments, five public schools were purposively selected, while random sampling was used in selecting twenty students at the secondary school level and ten teachers. This brought the sample size to thirty respondents from each school and a total of 300 respondents (200 students and 100 teachers). Data for the study was collected by means of questionnaire, which was structured on a four point likert scale. Appropriate permission was sought from the school management before commencing distribution, while two research assistants were involved in the instrument distribution which was retrieved on the spot. The questionnaire was divided into two sections; section A which elicited demographic information and section B which elicited responses to the question formulated. The data collected was descriptively analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The benchmark for acceptance are items with mean score 2.5 and above. Otherwise, the item will be rejected.

7 Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussions

Demographic data

Table 1. Demographic data of the respondents

Demographics	Perimeter	Students (n=200)		Teachers (n=100)	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	100	49.3	39	39.0
	Female	103	50.7	61	61.0
Age	15-20 years	200	100	-	-
	21-30 years	-	-	23	23.0
	31-40 years	-	-	60	60.0
	41 years and above	-	-	17	17.0

Field survey (2021)

In this study, secondary school students and teachers constitutes the study sample as presented in the able above. In the study male constitutes 49.3% and 39% respectively for students and teachers. Female constitutes 50.7% and 61% respectively for students and teachers, as shown in the

table above. The table indicates that all the students in the study are within the age group 15-20 years while the ages of the teachers cut across 21 to above 41 years with majority of the respondents within 31-40 years of age.

RQ1: What are the factors hindering the adoption of agricultural career among youths in Nigeria?

Table 2: Showing the factors hindering the adoption of agricultural career among youths in Nigeria

Statements	Mean*	Stdev
Inadequate experience	4.20	1.63
The tedious, dirty and unattractive nature of most agribusiness enterprises	4.61	1.55
Lack of knowledge in terms of technical and the management of agriculture	4.15	1.42
Lack of agriculture education that should be done at preschool level	4.53	1.21
Non-lucrative nature of Agriculture	4.89	1.43
Fear of the public view and society acceptance	4.02	0.91
Unstable income returns and profit	4.81	1.04
Difficulties in obtaining information	4.86	1.01
Lack of interest and willingness	4.25	1.83
Inadequate Credit Facility	4.77	1.14
Overall Means and standard deviation	4.51	1.32

* 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree

Source: Research Data computation (2021)

The result in Table 2 above presents the opinions of the respondents on the factors hindering the adoption of agricultural career among youths in Nigeria. All the items in the table have a mean score above 2.5, with average mean of the sector of 4.51 and standard deviation of 1.32. This shows that all the items in the table are the reasons why there is the policy of catch them youth in Agriculture has not been fully utilized in Nigeria. Among these are: inadequate experience (M 4.20; and SD 1.63); The tedious, dirty and unattractive nature of most agribusiness enterprises (M 4.61 and SD 1.55); Lack of knowledge in terms of technical and the management of agriculture (M=4.15; SD=1.42); Lack of agriculture education that should be done at preschool level (M=4.53; SD1.21); Non-lucrative nature of Agriculture (M=4.89; SD 1.43); Fear of the public view and society acceptance (M=4.02; SD=1.04); Unstable income returns and profit (M=4.81; SD=1.04); Difficulties in obtaining information (M=4.86; SD 1.01); Lack of interest and willingness (M=4.25; SD=1.83); Inadequate Credit Facility (M=4.77; SD=1.14). This shows that youths are not too interested in agriculture even though they have the physical strength for it. Among all the reasons is the fact that Agriculture is unattractive and non-lucrative. This support the result of some earlier studies such as Haruna, Asogwa and Ezhim (2019) and Mbah, Amah and Onwusika, (2017) who identified several challenges that made agriculture less attractive among the youth.

RQ2: To what extent would the introduction of agriculture catch them young programs in Public Schools enhance agricultural development?

Table 3: The extent to which the introduction of agriculture catch them young programs in Public Schools enhance agricultural development

Statement	Mean*	Stdev
It will influence their agricultural choice	4.32	1.04
It will Sensitize young ones on adoption of agricultural practices	4.18	1.02
It will ensure food safety	4.30	1.03
It will encourage participation in agriculture teaching and learning programme	4.22	1.18
It will ensure adoption of agricultural operations and practices	4.15	1.42

It will increase their knowledge if there are suitable programmes offered to them	4.53	1.21
The youth could in turn influence skills, attitudes and knowledge of other younger and older generations	4.89	1.43
The youth could serve as extension agents who interpret extension research results to other farmers in their communities	4.02	1.01
Overall Means and standard deviation	4.33	1.17

* 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree

Source: Research Data computation (2021)

The second research question centers on the proposition made in this study with the aim of investigating the extent to which the introduction of agriculture catch them young programs in Public Schools enhance agricultural development of this study. According to the outcome of this study, all the items in this study are above 2.5 which implies that they were all accepted as essential reason why the policy of catch them young programs in Public Schools should be implemented as a way of enhancing agricultural development. As shown in the Table, it will influence their agricultural choice (M=4.32; SD=1.04); It will Sensitize young ones on adoption of agricultural practices (M=4.18; SD=1.02); It will ensure food safety (M=4.30; SD=1.03); It will encourage participation in agriculture teaching and learning programme (M=4.22; SD=1.18); It will ensure adoption of agricultural operations and practices (M=4.15; SD=1.42); It will increase their knowledge if there are suitable programmes offered to them (M=4.53; SD=1.21); The youth could in turn influence skills, attitudes and knowledge of other younger and older generations (M=4.89; SD=1.42); and the youth could serve as extension agents who interpret extension research results to other farmers in their communities (M=4.02; SD=1.01). This result shows that engaging the youths in agricultural activities could impact agricultural development and ensures food security and as such supports Njeru (2017).

8 Conclusions and Recommendations

There was a time when agriculture culture was the major source of export in Nigeria; however, with the present rural-urban drift, the labour force that would have promote agriculture has abandoned it to the fragile older generation who has no strength to march the demand of agricultural output. The growing disinterest of youth in agricultural activities requires that something need to be done to bring back the interest of the people to agriculture. The result of this study, among other findings, revealed that introducing practical agriculture in secondary school will attract the attention of these youths in Agriculture. Bases on this result therefore, this study recommends the implementation of agricultural activities in the school curriculum to orientate the students on the importance and various aspects of agriculture, and indirectly influencing their choice of career.

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Appendix**PUBLIC POLICY: INTRODUCTION OF AGRICULTURE CATCH THEM YOUNG PROGRAMS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR ENHANCEMENT OF AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT.****REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

Dear Respondent,

I am carrying out a study on “Public Policy: Introduction of Agriculture catch them young programs in Public Schools for enhancement of Agriculture development.”, and you have been chosen to be part of the study. This questionnaire is only for academic purposes. Kindly select the response which applies to you and all information will be kept confidential

SECTION A

Gender: Male () Female ()

Age :

1. 15-20 ()
2. 21-30 ()
3. 31-40 ()

SECTION B:

Instructions: Please tick (√) as appropriate where

SA = Strongly Agree (SA), A = Agree, Un=undecided, D = Disagree (D), SD = Strongly Disagree (SD)

Key: Strongly agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1).

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	UN	D	SD
RQ1	What are the factors hindering the adoption of agricultural career among youths in Nigeria?					
1	Inadequate experience					
2	The tedious, dirty and unattractive nature of most agribusiness enterprises					
3	Lack of knowledge in terms of technical and the management of agriculture					
4	Lack of agriculture education that should be done at preschool level					
5	Non-lucrative nature of Agriculture					
6	Fear of the public view and society acceptance					
7	Unstable income returns and profit					
8	Difficulties in obtaining information					
9	Lack of interest and willingness					
10	Inadequate Credit Facility					
RQ2	To what extent will the introduction of agriculture catch them young programs in Public Schools enhance agricultural development?					
11	It will influence their agricultural choice					
12	It will Sensitize young ones on adoption of agricultural practices					
13	It will ensure food safety					
14	It will encourage participation in agriculture teaching and learning programme					
15	It will ensure adoption of agricultural operations and practices					
16	It will increase their knowledge if there are suitable programmes offered to them					
17	The youth could in turn influence skills, attitudes and knowledge of other younger and older generations					
18	The youth could serve as extension agents who interpret extension research results to other farmers in their communities					