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IMPROVING ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION BY FARMERSTHROUGH THE MASS MEDIA

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Abstract

In order to encourage massive participation in agriculture so as to ensure food security and sustainability the various governments of Nigerian since independence have introduced several programmes, policies and schemes on agricultural development (Bayode, Obiora and Oyana, 2012). Among these agricultural programmes, policies and schemes are the Back to Land, Operation Feed the Nation, Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures, River Basin Development Authority, Farm Settlement Scheme, Supervised Agricultural Credit and Loan Scheme, Agricultural Input Subsidies, Extensive Agricultural Research and Development, Agricultural Extension Programmes or Schemes aim generally at capacity building in agriculture, input provision, marketing of products and the supply or making available the various productive resources for agricultural and enhancing conducive atmosphere for agricultural investments in the country. In the light of the above, this study examined the meaning of agricultural education; scope and roles of agricultural education principles of agricultural education; meaning of mass media; the influences of mass-media on agricultural development and mass

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media sources of farmers' education. The challenges to effective utilization of mass media by farmers were also discussed and suggestions made.

Keywords: Improvement; Access; Agricultural Education; Farmers; Mass Media.

Introduction

Among the various agricultural programmes, agricultural education programme is regarded as the most important as it is geared towards fostering the peoples knowledge, skills and attitude in agriculture thereby promoting agricultural productivity (Ulewu, 2002). Osanema, (2006) defined agricultural education as a process of imparting knowledge, skills and attitude in agriculture to learners at any level.Obibuaku, (1983) described it as education and training given in agriculture from primary school through secondary and special schools, to the university. Akpomedaye, (2012) defines it as the transmission of the agricultural heritage of the society to individuals through the formal education process. Osinem, (2008) viewed agricultural education as a process of imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes in agriculture to the learners at any level. Agricultural education equips learners with the personal academic and career experiences needed for participation and entrepreneurship in agriculture (Arokoyo and Ndeobi, 2014). Agricultural education helps to produce able-bodies human resources capable of producing enough food for, the nation and even for export (Egun, 2009). Agricultural education plays an important role in preparing farmers, researchers, educators, extension staff and members of agricultural business contributions regarding agricultural development (OECD, 2007).

Scope and Roles of Agricultural Education

The scope of agricultural education according to Thumbs, (2001) includes the areas of teaching, research, and public outreach programmes. It is also designed to prepare students for employment in various occupations such as horticultural, agribusiness, agricultural mechanization, crop production animal husbandry and

landscaping. In order to prepare learners for successful focuses should generally be on providing learning experiences that enable them to;

- Demonstrate desirable work and habits
- Apply the basic agricultural competencies and back ground knowledge in agricultural and related occupations'
- Analyse entrepreneurial skills needed by individuals preparing to enter agriculture and related occupations.
- Acquire leadership and participatory skills necessary for the development of productive citizens in our democratic society
- Gain effective social and interpersonal communication skills
- Be aware of career opportunity in agriculture and set career objectives
- Acquire job seeking, employability and retention skills
- Advance in a career through a programme of continuing education and lifelong learning
- Recognized how new technologies impact agriculture and how agriculture impact the environment

Meanwhile, the objectives of agricultural education at the secondary school level according to Iwanyanwu, (2010) are

- To stimulate students interest in agriculture
- To ensure students to acquire basic knowledge of agriculture
- To develop basic agriculture skills in students
- To expose students to opportunities in the field of agriculture
- To prepare students for further studies in agriculture for further studies in agriculture
- To prepare students for occupations in agriculture.

Principles of Agricultural Education

There are three basic principles underlying agricultural education delivery as explained by Bonem, (2008). These principles are:

❖ Structured and organized instruction by which learners are presented with relevant content and concepts that

are systematically embedded in a curriculum. The curriculum is executed in a wide variety of ways in classroom, laboratory, shop, green house, school farm, or on field trips.

- Supervised agricultural experience by which students are allowed to display their experiences under supervision in activities that align with their interests and career goals- such as the one year, intensive farm projects or supervised industrial works experience scheme, home and farm stead improvement projects
- Career development support activities by which students are opportune to exhibit the training acquired through publicly oriented activities such as community projects, school improvement projects, livestock show projects, leadership camps, conferences etc.

Osiland, (2001) observed that in order to achieve the objectives of agricultural education at the secondary school level, the curriculum emphasizes on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and good or positive attitudes to the agriculture. Theory is supplemented with practices and all areas of agricultural productions are treated in the schools. However, Okonjo, (2003) and Alagamba, (2004) opined that to ensure the effective implementation of the agricultural education, curriculum, it is necessary that there should be adequate provision of functional mass media facilities to cater for the agricultural education needs of the farmers in all respects.

Meaning of Mass Media

Mass-media refers to a diverse array of media technology that reaches a large audience via mass communication. It is a medium which can be used to large group, often simultaneously.

(Nerone, 2006). Encyclopedia.com (2020) defined mass –media as tools for the transfer of information concepts and ideas to both general and specific audience. It is also viewed as the means of communication that reach large numbers of people in a short time.

Kris,(2018) refers to mass media as the technologies used as channels for a small group of people to communication with a larger number of people. They are the transport forms of mass communication, which can be defined as the dissemination of messages widely,

rapidly and continuously to Large and diverse audience in an attempts to influence them in some way.

Mass media means technology that is intended to reach a mass audience. It is the primary means of communication used to reach the vast majority of the general public. Mass- media plays significant roles in agricultural development have a major influence on the public opinion on certain topics.

The influence of Mass-media on Agricultural Development

The nature and extent of the use of mass media in the mobilization of people for agriculture determines the degree of success of agriculture. The agricultural program planners in developing countries realize that the development of agricultural technology could be hastened with the effective use of Mass media. Radio and televisions have been acclaimed to be the most effective media for diffusing the scientific knowledge to the masses (Shelly and Coster, 2000). Mass media helps to enlighten farmers on the use of various technologies to boost agricultural productivity. With the mainstream of the population of Nigeria engaged in agriculture actively, television could as a suitable medium of dissemination farm information and latest technical know-how. Farmers easily understand the operations, technology and instruction through television.

Arokoyo (2003) proved that Video, TV and radio are the major sources of information to farmers. Information sources for farmers are TV, radio publications, practical education newspapers agricultural exhibitions and extension workers (Ekoja, 2003).

Newspapers and farm magazines play vital role in the communication of agricultural information among the literate farmers. The increasing rate of or literacy in Nigeria offers new promises and prospects for utilizing print medium for agricultural information. The print media widens the scope of communication, cheap to afford and can be read at the farmers convince. It is permanent medium in that the message are imprinted permanently with high storage value which makes them suitable for reference and research (Perushothan, Kavaskar and Reddy,2003). Radio plays a vital role in disseminating agricultural information (Muhammad, 2006). But

radio is more powerful instrument for liberation of fast information due to its vast coverage in local areas. Rasak(2012) disclosed that radio agriculture broadcasting is effective for farmers and must be undertaken on long duration for agricultural extension. Knan (2010) revealed that the adoption of available technologies by farmers according to the recommendations, can enhance agricultural production.

Mass Media Sources of Farmers Education

Effective Communication of innovations on agriculture to farmers remains a promising strategy for increasing success in agricultural productivity endeavours. Moreover, for the farmers to adopt innovations and continue to put them into use, the new ideas must reach their farms and homes through effective communication medium (Undiandeye and Vosanka, 2008). Some of the mass media sources of farmer's information among others include;

- **Broadcast-** The sequencing of content in a broadcast is called a schedule. Radio and television programmes are distributed over frequency bands which are highly regulated. Such regulations includes determination of the width of the bands, range, licensing, types of receivers and transmitters, relevance and acceptability of the broadcasting content. Meanwhile, cable television programmes are often broadcasting simultaneously with radio and television programme, but have a more limited audience. By coding signals and requiring a cable converter box at individual recipient's locations, cable also enables subscription-based channels and pay-per-view services. A broadcasting organization may broadcast several programmes simultaneously, several channels (frequencies). Agricultural information can be meant to reach target farmers through these means.
- **Film-** This encompasses motion pictures as individual projects, as well as the field in general. Films are produced by recording people and objects with cameras, or creating them using animation techniques or special effects. Films comprise a series of individual frames, but when these images are shown in rapid succession, an illusion of motion is created. Film is considered by many to be an important art form. Films

entertain, educate, enlighten, and inspire audiences. Any film can become a worldwide attraction, especially with the addition of dubbing or subtitles that translate the film message films are also artifacts created films by specific cultures, which reflect those cultures, and in turn affect them.

❖ **Internet –**The internet is a more interactive medium of mass media, and can be briefly described as a network of networks; specifically, it is the worldwide, publicity accessible network of interconnected computer networks that transmit data by packet switching using the standard internet protocol (IP). The internet is quickly becoming the centre of mass media. Everything is becoming accessible via internet.Rather than picking up a newspaper, or watching the television or radio programme at a particular time, people can log on to the internet to get the news they want, when the y want it.

❖ **Podcast –**A podcast is a series of digital-media files which are distributed over the internet using syndication feeds for playback on portable media players and computers. The term podcast, like broadcast, can refer either to the series of content itself or to the method by which it is syndicated. The latter is also called podcasting. The host or author of a podcast is often called a podcaster.

❖ **Video Games-** A video game is a computer –controlled games in which a video display, such as a monitor or television, is the primary feedback device.

❖ **Audio recording and reproduction-** This is the electrical or mechanical re-creation or amplification of sound, often as music and loudspeakers, Compact cassettes, and digital audio players are typical examples.An album is a collection of related audio-recordings, released together to the public, usually commercially.

❖ **Magazines –** A magazine is a periodical publication containing a variety of articles, generally financed by advertising or purchased by readers. Magazines are typically published weekly, biweekly. Monthly bimonthly or quarterly, with a date on the cover that is in advance of the date it is actually published. They are often printed in colour on coated paper, and are bound with a soft cover.

❖ **Newspaper-** A newspaper is a publication containing news and

information and advertising, usually printed on low –cost paper called newsprint. It may be general or special interest most often published daily or weekly. The most important function of newspapers is to inform the public of significant events (Pavik and Mcintosh, 2017).

❖ **Outdoor media-**Outdoor media is a form of mass media which comprises bull boards, signs, placards placed outside and inside commercial building/objects like shops/buses, flying billboards. Many commercial advertisers use this mass media when advertising in public facilities such as sport stadiums.

Challenges toEffectiveUtilization of Mass Media by farmers

The utilization of mass media by farmers is faced, with the following constraints

❖ Financial Constraints due to the fact that majority of farmers are peasants and poor and may not be able to afford the purchase of mass media facilities or gadgets in order to acquire the needed information.

❖ **Irregular power supply**- The inadequate power supply in the country hinders the production capacity of newspaper houses and as well hinders the access of farmers to the information through the electronic mass media gadgets or facilities.

❖ Inadequate agricultural information are provided by mass media operators as the information supplied are not always relevant to the current needs of the farmers and most information are communicated in vague languages.

❖ Another Crucial problem of the Nigeria media is its Urban, elite – centered bias, and it is almost cynical neglect of the rural areas (Kadiri, 2009).

❖ Most of the agricultural information provided by the media houses do not reflect the needs of the Nigerian farmers /farming environment

❖ The low literacy level of Nigerian farmers makes it difficult for them to appreciates and access mass media information except those from friend and relatives or other local sources.

❖ The broadcast timing for agricultural information by electronic mass media hoses is inadequate to the farmer conveniences and thereby hindering the target audience access to it.

❖ Inadequate lack of resources at the disposal of the media practitioners inhibits their productivity on the reportage of technology and development news.

❖ Media programme interest of the people is selective as Campbell (2004) noted that audiences around seem disinclined to be interested in serious news media, tending to prefer news with at least an element of entertainment in it, where choices are offered between serious news, audiences often seem to prefer the entertainment based output.

Suggestions

In order to enhance or improve on the utilization of mass media for agricultural education by farmers, the following should be put in place;

❖ There is need for more creation of awareness by agricultural extension agencies concerning the needs for the farmers to be accessing agricultural education through the mass media means.

❖ There is need for constant power supply, this will help in easy usage of the mass media and also enables media houses in proper delivery and effective dissemination of information.

❖ There is need for extension delivery system particularly the communication and input delivery components to be strengthened in terms of increase in number of frontline extension personnel, capacity building and proper supervision. This will enable the extension and related organizations to be in continues contact with the farmers and together they can fashion out appropriate communication patterns, upgrade knowledge , attitudes and practices.

❖ Government should assist farmer in the area of adult literacy education and basic skill acquisition so that farmers can effectively make use of the different mass media for agricultural information.

❖ Agricultural information by the mass media should be based on the current needs of the farmers so as to get their interest in the news. Also the message content should be clear and simple.

❖ The broadcast should be done considering the time conveniences of the farmers.

❖ The mass media information should be broadcast repeatedly as the

frequency of broadcast of news content reflects its salience and importance.

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