PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH MANAGING SCHOOL FARMS AS EDUCATIONAL FACILITY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EDO STATE

BY

[1]OBUE, A & [2]EGBULE, P.E

[1]Department of Agricultural Education, College of Education, Warri, Delta State

[2]Department of Vocational Education (Agric Unit), Delta State University, Abraka

Abstract

The study was designed to identify problems associated with managing school farms by agricultural science in secondary schools in Edo State. Two research questions and one null hypothesis guided the study. The population comprised 482 Agricultural Science teachers in all the public secondary schools in Edo State. Sample size of 247 respondents was drawn using stratified random sampling technique. Data was collected from respondents using structured questionnaire. Mean was used to analyse research questions and hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test. The results of the analysis revealed that the problem included: poorly equipped school farm; poor management by school administrators, government and agricultural science teachers; inadequate fund to run school farm; poor school community relation among other. Strategies were suggested by the study to curb the problems. The null hypothesis stated was rejected. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that the school authorities (management) should seek and encourage other stakeholders in the investment and operation of school farm activities; the findings should be available to agricultural science teachers, school administrators and government so they can adopt the strategies identified to improve the management of school farms.

Keywords: Secondary schools, school farms, educational facility

Introduction

Government, private individuals and organizations are investing in education as a means of fostering national development. The government stated that, 'education has witnessed active participation of non-governmental agencies, communities and individuals as well as intervention' (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 2004). Thus, educational institutions have been established at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, with the hope that the nation's human resources would he transformed into competent and productive agents of development in all sectors of the economy.

In order to fulfill their objectives, educational institutions require an environment where teachers, students and other personnel enjoy their stay and perform their duties effectively. According to Akubue (1991), good school environment would foster desirable behavior, creativity, harmonious relationship and problem-solving skills among students. In the educational institutions, facilities constitute essential inputs which could generate favorable learning environment, facilitate interaction

and enhance achievement of educational objectives. In fact, school curriculum would be meaningful and functional if required educational facilities are provided in adequate quantity at appropriate time.

Educational facilities refer to non-human and non-financial resources. They also include all movable and immovable materials, which are used for teaching, learning and other school activities. They are synonymous with schoo1 physical facilities, school plant and school structures such as the school farm. Olagboye (2004) submitted that educational facilities consist of instructional resources such as audio and visual aids, graphics, printed materials, display materials and consumable materials. They also include physical resources such as land, building, furniture, equipment, machinery, vehicles, electricity and water supply infrastructure. Ojedele (2004) identified three components of educational facilities. These are school infrastructure, such as buildings and playgrounds; instructional facilities (teaching-learning materials, equipment and furniture) and school physical environment (beautification of the school environment).Thus, there are different kinds of facilities that could be used for teaching and learning purposes located within and outside school premises. Meaningful teaching/learning process is achieved when there are proper management of the facilities. Abdulkareem and Fasasi (2012) opined that management of facilities includes: planning, organizing, staffing, leading and controlling the processes of supply, utilization, maintenance and improvement of educational facilities in secondary schools.

Secondary education is a link between primary and tertiary levels. It is vital to national development and preparing its graduates in vocational occupations for self reliance (FRN, 2004). Management of facilities at this level is very vital to achievement of educational objectives. One of such facilities capable of preparing students to contribute meaningfully and become self-reliant especially through vocational training after graduation from the secondary school is the school farm.

Osinem (2008) defined the school farm as a means whereby students are trained directly and specifically in the thinking habits and manipulative skills required in production operations outside the school. The school farm offers students the opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies, and demonstrate farm principles and practices, carry out field experiment which cannot be accommodated in the laboratory (Ani, 1997). School farm as educational facility plays a complementary role in agricultural delivery making it very possible for learning-by-doing as provided by Agricultural Science. School farms are expected to have adequate equipment, farm implements/tools, farm structure and regular supply of inputs in addition to farm space to accommodate crops and livestock managed by students under the supervision of their teachers (Ani, 1997). These are the fundamentals of an operational school farm on which students could transfer classroom

instruction to practical experiences in the field. However, it is unfortunate that school farms in most Nigerian schools especially in Edo State are not properly equipped to prepare students for vocational occupations ahead of them (Iyare, 2015).

In most secondary schools in Edo State, it has been observed that many of the existing school farms are devoid of requisite structures, implements and other farm facilities. While in others these facilities are in a state of complete dilapidation consequent to total neglect of practical lessons in the school farms (Ladele, 1998). In some schools, most of the pupils come from rural farm families with a detailed knowledge of traditional agriculture gained from their parents. In some cases, these pupils' expectations from their learning experiences in school agriculture are high. Ladele (1998) lamented that, unfortunately, practical experience appears elusive to them due to lack of school farms (Ladele, 1998). In urban areas, pupils have little or no knowledge of agriculture and so their involvement in practical experiences in the school farm is perceived as a drudge and untidy business. Egbule (2004) also noted that the teaching and learning activities of agriculture is grossly insufficient to elicit the desired level of initiative and creativity in students. Egbule further explained that the present instructional strategy in form of "showing" "telling" and "observation" with a few cases of "doing and practice" is not in line with "learning by doing" as recommended in the curriculum. However, effectiveness in agricultural delivery in secondary schools is dependent on the display of mastery of the subject matter content by juxtaposition of classroom instruction with the school farm by teachers of agriculture. Specific learning experiences in the school farm which should enable students to form right habits and which is necessary for success in any relevant agricultural occupation depends on successful management of the school farm by the agricultural science teachers in utilizing it as an educational facility. Iyare (2015) also identified educational level of agricultural science teachers as a factor that influences the way school farm is managed. It, therefore, implies that agricultural science teachers with higher education will be more equipped to manage school farm than those with lower educational qualification. The study seeks to identify problems faced by agricultural science teachers in managing the school farm as educational facility and to proffer strategies to improve the situation.

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the study include to:

1. Identify the problems faced by Agricultural Science teachers in managing school farms as an educational facility in secondary schools in Edo State.
2. identify strategies that improve management of school farms by agricultural science teachers in secondary schools in Edo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were stated for the study

1. What are problems faced by Agricultural Science teachers in managing school farms as an educational facility in secondary schools in Edo State?

2. What strategies can be used to improve management of school farms in secondary schools in Edo State?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between Agricultural Science Teachers with educational status of NCE and B.Sc on problems that affect managing of school farms as educational facility in secondary schools in Edo State

Research Method and Procedure

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study was four hundred and eighty two (482) Agricultural Science teachers (Ministry of Education, Research and Statistics Department, Benin, 2014). Stratified random sampling technique was used to obtain a sample of two hundred and forty seven (247) respondents.

The instrument had a reasonable face validity and reliability coefficient of 0.78 using the test-retest method which was high enough to support the use of the instrument in the research. All copies of the questionnaire distributed were duly completed and were returned.

Items with mean weight of 3.0 and above were accepted while items with less mean weight were rejected. The questionnaire was coded with nominal values designed for each response that was expected from the respondents. Each of the items was scored on the basis of the following code. The items are on 5 point scale of strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), Undecided (U), Disagreed (D) and strongly disagreed (SD). The data were analysed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions while t-test was used to test the null hypothesis

Results

Table 1: Mean ratings of responses of Agricultural Science teachers on problems of managing the school farm by agricultural science teachers as an educational facility in secondary schools in Edo State (N= 247)

S/N	Statement items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Low competency in teaching of technical aspects of agriculture	3.35	0.77	Agreed
2	Low motivation of teachers by the Government	3.13	0.83	Agreed
3	Poor attitude of parents to agriculture	3.92	0.93	Agreed
4	Poor attitude of students to agriculture	3.47	0.84	Agreed
5	Supervising technical staff in the farm	3.25	0.75	Agreed
6	Uncomfortable teaching environment in the school farm	3.56	0.80	Agreed

7	Inadequate teaching – learning facilities in the school farm	4.05	0.79	Agreed
8	No basis for evaluating students learning process	3.05	0.75	Agreed
9	Unavailability of human resources	3.81	0.83	Agreed
10	School administrators concern to school farm	3.61	0.77	Agreed
11	Inadequate land to demonstrate skills needed in farming	1.86	0.91	Disagreed
12	Inadequate of fund to run the farm	4.19	0.79	Agreed
13	Educational qualification of teachers	3.13	082	Agreed
14	Low access to innovation on farming	4.06	0.91	Agreed

Field Work, 2015; SD= Standard deviation

The data presented in Table 1 showed that thirteen out of fourteen items had mean range of 3.13 to 4.06 while item 11 had a mean score below the cut-off point of 3.00 which indicates rejected. The result indicated the item the respondent agreed on were impediments or problems to Agricultural Science teachers in utilizing the school farm as an educational facility. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.75 to 0.93. This indicates that the respondents were close to one another in their responses as they were not far from the mean.

Table 2: Strategies that can be used to improve management of school farms in secondary schools

S/N	Statement items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Funds should be provided to the agricultural science teachers to run the activities in the school farm especially by the government	3.15	0.71	Agreed
2	Agricultural science teacher should attend conferences, workshop and other avenues from to time to improve their competency in managing the school farm	3.23	0.76	Agreed
3	Parents and community members should encourage the activities in the school by encouraging their and provide fund to improve the school	3.46	0.81	Agreed
4	Agricultural science teachers should co-operate with technical staff by understanding each other when using the school	3.31	0.94	Agreed
5	Time to time maintenance should be carried out on equipments used in the school farm	3.22	0.85	Agreed
6	Adequate teaching materials should be provided to enhance teaching/learning process	3.66	0.90	Agreed

7	School administrator should encourage human resources by co-operating with them	3.03	0.69	Agreed

Field Work, 2015; SD = Standard deviation

The data presented in Table 2 showed that the seven (7) items had means range of 3.03 to 3.46. The mean scores were above the cut-off point of 3.00 which indicated that the respondents accepted that the identified items were strategies to improve school farm management in secondary schools. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.69 to 0.94. This indicates that the respondents were close to one another in their responses as they were not far from the mean.

Table 3: t-test analysis of the mean ratings of responses of agricultural science teachers with NCE and B.Sc on the impediments that stand in the way of managing school farm as an educational facility in secondary schools in Edo State

Educational Status	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**t-value**	**t-tab**
NCE	86	3.60	0.60	7.62	3.08
B.SC	161	3.39	0.43		
Total	**247**				

N= Number of respondents; SD= Standard deviation; t-value (calculated t); t-table (observed t); P=0.05 level of significance

Table 3 shows the t-test summary analysis of impediments or problems that affect managing of school farm as educational facility in secondary schools in Edo State. The data showed that the t-value was greater than the t-tab at 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there is significant difference between the mean ratings of the Agricultural Science teachers on the impediments that stand in the way of managing the school farm as an educational facility in secondary schools in Edo State. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Results

The result in Table 1 showed that the respondents agreed that most the identified items were impediments in utilizing the school as an educational facility. The findings show that agricultural science teachers in Edo state are faced with low competency in of teachers using the school farm, inadequate teaching/learning facilities, inadequate fund, low access to innovation, poor attitude of school administrators among others. This indicates that most school farms in Edo State are poorly equipped school farm, inadequate fund to run school farms; and poorly managed school farms by school administrators, government and agricultural science teachers among others. These problems retard effective teaching and learning of agriculture science in the schools. Imparting practical skills to students can only be achieved when

teachers demonstrate with the appropriate equipments (Jjemba, 2010). In collaboration with the findings UNESCO (1999) observed that lack of financial resources hindered the expansion of facilities which led to specific problems in vocational subjects like agriculture. They added that lack of funds prevents schools from developing their farms. A teacher quality is assessed with reference to the level of education and training, frequency of attendance of in-service courses and on the number and type of disciplinary actions taken against teachers (Douglas, 2004). From the result it was found out that educational qualification is barrier to effective management of the school farm which will in turn affect negatively the teaching/learning process in the school farm

The result in Table 2 showed that the respondents agreed that the identified items were strategies to improve the management of school farm as an educational facility. The strategies include school-community relationship; teachers to acquire innovations through conferences, workshop and other related avenues; fund provided by relevant institutions; periodical facility management among others. School facilities tend to depreciate as soon as they are provided-and put into use. Therefore, there is need for maintenance through repair and servicing of components in order to restore their physical condition and sustain their working capacity. Maintenance enhances performance and durability. It also prevents wastages. There are preventive, corrective, breakdown and shutdown maintenance services (Adeboyeje, 2000). Secondary school administrators and teachers have certain' functions to perform on each of the identified stages of facility management. The functions are planning, coordinating, staffing, leading and controlling (Olagboye, 2004). This indicates that the school administrators have important roles to play in order to achieve the objective of utilizing a school farm. Ani (1997) noted that learning takes place faster under natural environment. This notwithstanding, man's love for natural beauty has made natural environment a vital element in an ideal school. This implies the school farm needs to be conductive atmosphere for learning to take place. Olaitan (1984) also stated that the school farm provides a means by which students can develop their farming skills in planning, management and evaluation of farming enterprise and a useful background for future agriculturalists. This implies school farm needs to be properly managed for students to be equipped for self employment capabilities after school thus creating jobs for themselves and others.

Result in Table 3 showed that there was significant difference between the mean ratings of between Agricultural Science teachers with NCE and B.Sc on the problems that stand in the way of managing the school as educational facility. This implies that level of education influenced the way the groups of teachers appraised the problems facing school farm management as educational facility.

Conclusion

Specific learning experiences learnt by students to form right habits and which is necessary for success in any relevant agricultural occupation depends on successful management of the school farm by the agricultural science teacher in utilizing it as an educational facility. However, most school farms in Edo state if faced with problems such as poor equipped facilities; poor management by school administrators, government and agricultural science teachers amongst others. These problems hinder the effective implementation of agricultural education curriculum which equips students with skills needed to be self-reliant with vocational agricultural occupation.

Strategies such school-community relationship; teachers to acquire innovations through conferences, workshop and other related avenues; fund provided by relevant institutions; periodical facility management among others were identified needed to curb the problems facing the school farms. Utilizing the identified strategies will help the agricultural science teacher to manage the school effective as an educational facility.

Recommendations

1. The school authorities (management) should seek and encourage other stakeholders in the investment and operation of school farm activities
2. The findings should be available to agricultural science teacher, school administrators and government to enable them to adopt the in improving the management of school farms

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