

AGRICULTURAL LITERACY NEEDS FOR POVERTY REDUCTION AMONG URBAN YOUTHS IN DELTA STATE

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Abstract

The study was designed to identify agricultural literacy need for poverty reduction among youths in Delta State. Three research questions and one null hypothesis guided the study. The population comprised nine thousand three hundred and ninety (9390) youths. Sample size of 940 respondents was drawn from the population using Proportional random sampling technique. Data was collected from respondents using structured questionnaire and hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test. The results of the analysis revealed that most the youths had low income status due to unemployment; needed to be equipped with skills engage in agricultural occupation in the urban to alleviate poverty; and strategies were identified to improve agricultural literacy in the area. The null hypothesis stated was accepted. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that the findings of the study should be made available to the government and non-governmental organizations responsible for agricultural literacy programmes so that they will utilize the strategies identified by the study to promote agricultural literacy programmes in the State and other parts of the country; government should use agricultural literacy as a tool for reducing unemployment and poverty rate among youths

Introduction

Nigeria is an African country with a population of about 150 million made up of over 250 ethnic groups (NPC, 2012). The majority of the population is enmeshed in the net of abject poverty due to faulty economic policies and unsustainable poverty alleviation programmes of successive governments. The essence of development is to achieve satisfactory standard of living of the people within the existing or improved structural framework. The primary focus of economic development of any nation is to positively transform the wellbeing of individual citizens and better the human living conditions. Nigeria is a wealthy country with majority of its population living below the poverty line.

Rural dwellers and the urban ghetto inhabitants, gripped firmly by the clutches of poverty in an affluent nation, are the major victims of Nigeria's backwardness and

apparent underdevelopment. These areas lack basic infrastructures like accessible roads, pipe borne water, functional educational system, cottage industries, functional healthcare delivery services, poor communication, functional of transportation, electricity, decent and affordable homes and others. These features are a reflection of a country's gross domestic product (GDP) and other aggregate economic indicators which serve as the yardstick upon which the economic status of a sovereign nation is being measured (Okeke, 2001). The concentration of the disadvantaged in inner-city ghettos and the isolation of these areas from more affluent communities compound the problems of the poor. This social isolation leads to economic isolation and impoverishment.

Simply being poor does not make an individual a part of the "underclass". Indeed, the

underclass constitutes a minority of the poor. The underclass is a core of inner-city poor, those individuals and families who are trapped in an unending cycle of joblessness and dependence on welfare or criminal earnings. Their communities are often plagued by drug abuse, lawlessness, crime, violence, filthy environment with dotted shanty structures and poor schools (Okeke, 2001; Zanden, 1996). According to Marks (1991), high inner-city rates of family disintegration, welfare dependency, drug abuse and crime are additional outcomes of faulty economic organization. Many underclass women were teenage mothers and high school dropouts who subsequently found themselves sidetracked without the resources or skills to escape a life of poverty. In contemporary societies, the rise of female headed families is associated with the inability of underclass men to secure steady jobs for sustenance of their livelihood. Poverty derives from lack of income-producing employment is passed on from generation to generation un-end.

Poverty is a major development problem in Nigeria. Unlike most other economies, the region has not yet succeeded in solving the basic livelihood problem. According to Mwabu (2005), over 50% of the African population lives below the international subsistence standard of one dollar a day. An even large population is at risk of suffering a reduction in their current standard of living, irrespective of poverty status. He stressed that the issue of vulnerability (the risk of falling below a threshold standard of living) is particularly poignant because of its reminder that even the meager necessities that are available to the poor are not guaranteed. Poverty is highly visible in most African countries especially Nigeria. Over crowded settlements in major urban (due to rural-urban migration) areas without basic social services are common. *Onwudiwe N., Iyare R. & Odjegba, O. G.*

Nigeria has a per capita income of about US \$310 and a human development index of 0.4 (Ovie and Akpomovie, 2011). The levels of

poverty are so high at individual and household levels that an increasing number of Nigerians are finding it difficult to eat and clothe themselves (Anyanwu, 1997). Such Nigerians also find it difficult to afford decent shelter. A recent survey by the Federal Office of Statistics shows that the incidence of poverty has increased tremendously since 1986 (FOS, 2008). In order to solve this problem, there is need to equip youths who are the future generation of our country with skills required for them to be self employed and reliant.

Youth is a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence. This period is characterized by many features which make them easily open to vices that are not accepted in the society. One way to defeat these vices by youth is by providing functional education which gives them the fantastic hope that comes by being able to read, be skilled and realize their dreams. Therefore, education that develops the totality of the mind is the new right for them. One way youths can be equipped with skills required to cope with poverty in urban areas is through agricultural literacy

Agricultural Literacy provides knowledge and understanding of our food and fiber system. An individual possessing such knowledge would be able to synthesize, analyze, and communicate basic information about agriculture. Basic agriculture information includes: the production of plant and animals products, the economic impact of agriculture, its societal significance, agriculture's important relationship with natural resources and the environment, the marketing of agricultural products, the processing of agricultural products, the public agricultural policies, the global significance of agriculture, and the distribution of agricultural products (Frick, Kahler and Miller, 1991).

Agricultural literacy also provides its recipients with the knowledge and skills on how to produce food and about how we continue to be raced, gendered, faithed, and classed by agricultural policies, practices, and groups. In

achieving this, youths need to read and respond critically to agricultural “words” as well, directing explicit attention to the powerful roles on rhetoric plays in mediating our relationships to one another, farm owners, workers, farming communities, and food (Brewster, 2012). Agricultural literacy programmes is important to the future of any nation and the discipline of agriculture (Frick and Spotanski, 1990). Because the majority of the public is now almost completely removed from agriculture in their daily lives, it is of utmost importance that best practices in agricultural production are identified to ensure agricultural literacy is maintained in future generations. The methods used to present agricultural education to students can greatly influence students' attitudes towards learning material (Okiror, Matsiko and Oonyu, 2011).

Riedmiller (2002) stated that the quality of a school garden or agricultural learning material is the single most important factor influencing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of youth learning about agriculture. Providing agricultural literacy through youth programmes is imperative for youths as it will help them to understand their environment and make use of the advantages in it to sustain themselves in these perilous times. It will help the youths to develop favourable attitude towards agriculture and community especially the in urban areas (Egbule, 2002). Agricultural literacy programmes provide vocational training to the youth. For instance, in 1987, the Better Life Programme was created to empower women, especially female youths in the rural areas through skills acquisition and healthcare training. In 1992, the Fadama program was initiated to enhance food self sufficiency, reduce poverty, and create opportunities for employment in rural areas (Ogundimu, 2006).
urban areas
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Urban agriculture as submitted by Bailkey and Nasr (2000) is the growing, processing, and distribution of food and other products through intensive plant cultivation and animal husbandry in and around cities.” This decreases

the transportation time of food, which means that it reaches consumers more quickly, in a fresher state, and with less fuel consumption for shipping. Urban agriculture is also referred as an industry that produces, processes and markets food and fuel, largely in response to the daily demand of consumers within a town, city, or metropolis, on land and water dispersed throughout the urban and peri-urban area, applying intensive production methods, using and reusing natural resources and urban wastes, to yield a diversity of crops and livestock (Smit, Ratta and Nasr, 1996). Urban agriculture projects that are initiated and driven by the community tend to be more successful because of their local knowledge and understanding of resident’s needs and assets (Bradley and Galt, 2013; White, 2010). Efforts such as considering cultural preferences for food, accepting modern farming techniques, and attracting minority farmers are successful strategies for farmers markets have been powerful tool overcome poverty prevalence in urban areas (Fisher, 1999; Park, Quinn, Florez, Jacobson, Neckerman and Rundle, 2011; Suarez-Balcazar, 2006). However, one challenge for urban farmers and municipal decision makers engaged with urban agriculture in Nigeria is lack of relevant information and technical assistance. It becomes pertinent to identify the agricultural literacy needs and strategies to improve the situation so as to help these farmers especially youths in these urban areas to alleviate poverty through urban agriculture.

The youths of Delta State have continued to live with a lot of environmental problems, from health hazards due to lack of safe water and arable land. Despite the rich oil wealth which accounts for 90% of its earning from oil and gas and 60% of its revenue from the Federal Government, the youths of this area remain largely unfulfilled and neglected (Arubaye, 2010). Edukugho (2007), also opined that Delta State youths is mostly characterized with restiveness and disturbance which could also be traced to the large number of uneducated, unskilled and unemployed youths. It is against

this background the study seeks to identify the agricultural needs of youths for poverty reduction in Delta State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to identify agricultural literacy needs for poverty reduction among urban youths in Delta State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the characteristics of urban youths in Delta State;
2. Examine agricultural literacy needs of urban youths in Delta.
3. Identify strategies for improving the effectiveness of an agricultural literacy programmes in urban areas

Research Questions

The following research questions were stated for the study:

1. What are the characteristics of urban youths in Delta State?
2. What are the agricultural literacy needs of urban youths in Delta State
3. What strategies are needed for improving effectiveness of agricultural literacy programmes in urban areas

Hypothesis

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between male and female agricultural literacy understanding

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Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study

Results

Table 1: Demographic characteristic of urban youth in Delta state (N=857)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)		
Below 13 []	-	-
14 – 17 []	61	7.12
18 – 22 []	233	27.19
23 and above []	563	65.69
Sex		
Male	497	
Female	360	
Marital Status		
Single	516	60.21
Married	201	23.45

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was nine thousand three hundred and ninety (9390) unemployed youths (National directorate of employment (NDE, 2013). Proportional random sampling technique was used to obtain a sample of nine hundred and forty (940) respondents from the total population. The total population of the unemployed youths was divided into strata according to the three Senatorial Districts in the State. Ten (10) percent was randomly selected from each stratum that makes up the total population.

The instrument was face validated by experts and reliability coefficient of 0.74 was obtained using the test-retest method. The value was high enough to support the use of the instrument in the research (Inomiesa, 1993). Eight hundred and fifty seven (857) copies (91.17%) of the questionnaires distributed were duly 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 disagree (SD). The data were analysed using means, standard deviation while t-test was used to analyze the hypotheses

Divorced	51	05.95
Widowed	89	10.38
Educational level		
No formal education	54	06.30
Primary education	131	15.28
Secondary education	230	26.83
Tertiary education	442	51.57
Family size (Number of years)		
Below 3	503	58.69
4 – 6	124	14.46
7 – 9	163	19.01
Above 9	67	07.81
Years in youth programmes		
Below 1	512	59.74
1 – 3	173	20.19
4 – 6	81	9.45
Above 6	91	10.61
Ownership of business		
None	459	53.55
Self owned	161	18.78
Employed worker	237	27.65
Income level monthly(N)		
Less than 20000	611	71.29
20000 – 40000	101	11.78
41000 – 60000	91	10.61
Above 60000	54	6.30

Source: Field Work, 2015

The result in Table 1 shows that majority (65.69%) of the youths were above 23 years. None of the respondents were below 13 years, 17.2% of the respondents were between the ages of 14 – 17years, 18 – 22 years was 27.19%. Response on gender showed that 59.9% of respondents were male while 42% were female. Response on educational level showed that 6.30% had no form of education, 15.28% had primary education, 26.83% secondary education and 51.57% completed tertiary education. Response on family size of the respondents showed that 58.68% below 3 in number, 14.46% are 1 – 3 in number, 19.01% are 4 – 6 in number, and 7.81% were above 6 in number. Response of respondents on years in

youth programmes indicated that most (59.74%) of the youths have participated in youth problem below 1 year; 20.19% have participated between 1 – 3 years, 9.45% have participated 4 – 6 years, 10.61% have participated above 6 years. Response on ownership of business indicted that most of respondents (53.55%) are not in any form of business, 18.78% had their own business while 27.65% are employed in organizations. Response on income level showed that 71.29% of the respondents had less than N20,000 income level, 11.78% had N20,000 – 40,000, 10.61% had N41,000 – 60,000 and 6.30% had N60,000 and above income level.

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Table 2: Agricultural literacy needs of urban youths (N=857)

S/N	Statement items	Mean	S.D	Remark
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1	Understanding ones environment before engaging in an agricultural venture	3.31	0.63	Needed
2	Establishing a farm	2.81	0.71	Not needed
3	Rudiments in crop production	2.56	0.61	Not needed
4	Rudiments in producing livestock consumed in the area	3.01	0.53	Needed
5	Factors to consider in establishing a farm	3.51	0.71	Needed
6	Proper use of fertilizers	2.50	0.81	Not Needed
7	Rational utilization livestock feeds	2.81	0.65	Not Needed
8	Consumer behavior	3.08	0.68	Needed
9	Food safety	2.72	0.72	Not Needed
10	The use of modern communication technology to improve agricultural activities	2.83	0.74	Not Needed
11	Market strategies to sell products	2.91	0.81	Not Needed
12	Enlightenment on agricultural policies	3.03	0.72	Needed
13	Concept of food sustainability	2.52	0.75	Not Needed
14	The use of storage facilities	3.51	0.76	Needed
15	Environmental Education	3.03	0.73	Needed
16	Farm management	2.72	0.62	Not Needed
17	Storage Technology	3.09	0.71	Needed
18	Entrepreneurial education in agric	2.90	0.61	Not Needed
19	Food safety education	3.70	0.85	Needed
20	Consumer education	3.10	0.88	Needed
21	Use of modern technology in Agric	3.19	0.77	Needed
22	Soil formation and management	2.78	0.79	Not Needed
23	Farm mechanization	4.10	1.02	Needed
24	Agricultural geography	2.90	0.88	Not Needed
25	Agricultural arithmetic	3.49	0.95	Needed
26	Agricultural history	4.12	0.72	Needed
27	Birds and how they affect farming and farming life	2.90	0.65	Not Needed
28	Agricultural English- to include correct use and spelling terms, writing and reading about farming and farm life	4.31	0.84	Needed
29	Farm sanitation and health	4.11	0.81	Needed
30	Contributions of agriculture to society and to the welfare of man	3.87	0.78	Needed

Source: Field Work, 2015

The data presented in Table 2 showed that 17 out of 30 items were needed by the respondents to be agricultural literate. The standard deviation of the items ran that respondents were unanimous in their responses as they

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Table 3: Strategies for improving the effectiveness of an agricultural literacy programmes in urban areas (N=857)

S/N	Statement items	Mean	S.D	Remark
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1	Agricultural extension agents and agricultural science teachers should be used so to promote agricultural literacy	3.51	0.63	Agreed
2	Agricultural literacy could be effective when inculcated into educational programme	3.31	0.72	Agreed
3	Youths undergoing agricultural literacy programmes should be provided with funds to carryout agricultural activities after graduation	3.56	0.74	Agreed
4	Agricultural literacy can be promoted passed through youth clubs	4.51	0.78	Agreed
5	Agricultural literacy can be promoted through the mass media so as to cover a large populace	3.61	0.68	Agreed
6	Social networking systems can be used to promote agricultural literacy especially among young ones	4.03	0.54	Agreed

Source: Field Work, 2015

The result in Table 3 showed that statement items had a mean range of 3.31 to 4.03, the means were above the cut-off of 2.50. This implied that the respondents agreed that there are strategies needed to improve agricultural literacy in the area. The standard deviations of the statement items ranged from 0.54 to 0.78, which indicated that the respondents' responses were close to one another and also were not far from the mean.

Table 4: t-test analysis of the mean ratings of male and female (gender) youths on the appraisal of agricultural literacy needs and level of understanding of urban youths in Delta State

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	t-tab
Male	497	4.12	0.81	1.62	1.96
Female	360	4.04	0.73		
Total	857				

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

Table 4 shows the t-test summary analysis of male and female (gender) youth's appraisal on agricultural literacy needs and level of understanding of urban youths in Delta State. The data showed that the t-value was lesser than the t-tab at 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female (gender) youths on the appraisal of agricultural literacy needs and level of understanding of urban youths in Delta State. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion of Results

Characteristic of urban youths in Delta state

The result in Table 1 indicated that majority of the respondents age were above 23 years which shows the respondents are within the are likely to amenable to changes and education. The age is also an incentive for lasting development of sustainable cultural practice that can enhance production (Fakoya, Agbonlahor and Dipeolu, 2007). This implies that agricultural literacy programme will of benefit to them as it can help to equip them with skills for self-reliance. The result also indicated that most of the respondents were educated as most of them had above primary education. Education is very necessary for man in order to articulate himself and achieve fullness (Apata and Shitu, 2013). The level of education will assist them to

identify and utilize opportunities around them and appreciate the skill, knowledge and attitude provided by agricultural literacy programmes. Response on family size indicated that the respondents needed to be equipped with skills to make income for their family. The result in Table 1 also showed that most of the youths newly had experience or got involved in agricultural literacy programmes. This implies that most the urban youths were still novice of modern agricultural techniques to make a living through vocational agricultural occupations. Most of the youths don't have a business or job and make income less than N20, 000 per month. This implies that most of the urban youths were unemployed and lives below economic standard. According to Makinwa-Adebusoye (1991) income level of youths was low by any standard within the country irrespective of location and the growth of such income levels was similarly low.

Agricultural literacy needs of urban youths in Delta State

The result in Table 2 showed that the respondents needed of some basic knowledge to practice agriculture such as understanding ones environment before engaging in an agricultural venture, rudiments in producing livestock consumed, factors to consider in establishing a farm, consumer behavior, enlightenment on agricultural policies among others. This also implies that the youths needed to be equipped with the knowledge, attitude and skills to be competent in the areas they have low understanding through agricultural literacy. An agriculturally literate person understands the food and fiber system of his environment (urban area). This includes the history and current economic, social, and environmental significance his country with regards to agricultural production. Meischen and Trexler (2003) submitted that agricultural literacy entails knowledge and understandings of agriculturally related scientific and technologically-based concepts and processes required for personal decision making, participation in civic and cultural affairs, and

economic productivity. Utilizing agricultural literacy will produce informed youths able to participate in establishing the policies that will support a competitive agricultural industry in this country and abroad and get involved with agricultural occupations that yield better income in urban areas to alleviate poverty and reduce restiveness.

Strategies for improving the effectiveness of an agricultural literacy programmes

Result in Table 3 indicated showed that the respondents agreed that the identified items were strategies to improve agricultural literacy in the area. Some of the strategies included: using agric teacher or extension agent to promote agricultural literacy; introducing agricultural literacy into educational programmes; providing funds for youths who had undergone agricultural literacy programme.

Goldstein, Bellis, Morse, Myers, and Ura, (2011) and Hodgson, (2012) submitted that the funds and projects provided by US government for agricultural development helps youths in urban areas to get involved in agricultural occupations, thereby reducing unemployment and poverty rate among urban youths. Hodgson (2012) also found out that the US government utilizes resource persons such as agric extension agents and agric teachers to carryout agricultural literacy programmes for effective educative process. Social media can be of help to share agricultural innovations as most youth often spend time using social network through their phones, laptop and other devices. These strategies can help to improve the potency of agricultural literacy programmes in urban areas.

Table 4 showed that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female (gender) youths on the appraisal of agricultural literacy needs and level of understanding of urban youths in Delta State. It therefore implies both gender had same needs and perception of agricultural literacy. Providing the agricultural literacy programmes

or classes will be of benefit to the youths irrespective of gender

Conclusions

Poverty is derived from lack of income-producing employment occupation and this problem has been a major set-back to youths in the country. Agricultural literacy programs provides the needed knowledge and understandings of agriculturally related scientific and technologically-based concepts and processes required for personal decision making, participation in civic and cultural affairs, and economic productivity irrespective of the location of the environment. There is need for agricultural literacy programme to be provided for the youths of benefit to them as it can help to equip them with skills for self-reliance especially for youths in urban area.

Basic agricultural practice such as establishment of farm, rudiments in crop production, use of fertilizer, utilization of livestock feeds, food safety, use of modern communication technology, marketing strategies, food sustainability among others were found to be needed and addressed by agricultural literacy programmes for youths in Delta State to get involved in income generating agricultural occupation to alleviate poverty.

Recommendations

1. The State government should encourage youths to engage in agricultural literacy programmes by providing funds and enabling environment to practice agricultural occupations in urban areas
2. The findings of the study should be made available to the government and non-governmental organizations responsible for agricultural literacy programmes so that they will utilize the strategies identified by

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the study to promote agricultural literacy programmes in the State and other parts of the country.

3. The State government should use agricultural literacy as a tool for reducing unemployment and poverty rate among youths

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