



A Panacea for Job Creation and Mitigating the Effect of Unemployment in Nigeria: A Review on the Role of Agricultural Education

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Received: 01.11.2024 | Accepted: 03.11.2024 | Published: 15.12.2024

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DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14914178

Abstract		Original Research Article
<p>Unemployment remains a pressing issue in Nigeria, with detrimental effects on individuals, families, and the economy at large. This paper explores the potential of agricultural education as a solution to address unemployment and foster job creation in Nigeria. By examining the current State of unemployment, the significance of agriculture in the Nigerian economy, and the role of education in promoting agricultural development, this paper shows that investing in agricultural education can serve as a panacea for job creation and alleviate the adverse effects of unemployment. Furthermore, it provides recommendations for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to leverage agricultural education effectively to tackle unemployment in Nigeria.</p> <p>Keywords: Unemployment, Job Creation, Agricultural Education, Economy, Stakeholders</p>		

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment remained a significant challenge in Nigeria, with a considerable portion of the population being unemployed or underemployed (Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, 2023). This situation not only hampers economic growth but also poses threats to social stability, as highlighted by the World Bank in 2022. Addressing unemployment is crucial for fostering economic development and maintaining social cohesion.

According to the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) data from 2023, the unemployment rates remained persistently high, with a significant increase from 0.1 to 4.2 percent in the first quarter, and up to 5 percent at the third quarter of the year, with portion of the population either unemployed or underemployed. Factors contributing to this situation include rapid population growth, inadequate infrastructure, and a scarcity of job opportunities, as highlighted by Okafor in 2019. These factors exacerbate the unemployment challenge, leading to socioeconomic implications such as increased poverty levels, higher rates of

crime, and heightened social unrest (Afolabi and Adewale in 2020). Addressing these issues is crucial for fostering economic stability and social harmony in Nigeria. This paper review how agricultural education offers a promising avenue to tackle unemployment in Nigeria by equipping individuals with the skills needed for employment in the agricultural sector, thereby stimulating job creation and contributing to overall economic growth.

Role of Agriculture in the Nigerian Economy

Agriculture has long served as the backbone of the Nigerian economy, playing a crucial role in its historical development and shaping its socio-economic landscape. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) highlighted in 2018 the historical significance of agriculture in Nigeria, underscoring its multifaceted contributions to GDP, employment, and rural development.

Firstly, agriculture has traditionally been a significant contributor to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of

about 18,738.41 billion naira, with various reports from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in 2021 emphasizing its substantial share. Even as the economy diversifies, agriculture remains a vital sector, providing income and sustenance for millions of Nigerians.

Secondly, agriculture serves as a primary source of employment in Nigeria, particularly in rural areas where the majority of the population resides. The sector absorbs a significant portion of the labor force, offering employment opportunities across various value chains, from farming to processing and distribution. This employment not only sustains livelihoods but also contributes to poverty alleviation and rural development.

Furthermore, the agricultural sector plays a crucial role in rural development by providing infrastructure, stimulating economic activities, and fostering social cohesion within rural communities. Investments in agriculture often lead to improved access to markets, healthcare, and education, thereby enhancing the overall well-being of rural populations.

Moreover, agriculture holds immense potential for driving economic diversification and sustainable growth in Nigeria, as highlighted by Nwachukwu *et al.*, 2020. By leveraging its vast arable land, abundant water resources, and diverse agro-ecological zones, Nigeria can enhance productivity, promote value addition, and capitalize on export opportunities in agricultural commodities. This transformation not only reduces dependence on oil revenues but also fosters resilience against external shocks and promotes inclusive growth by integrating smallholder farmers and agribusinesses into value chains.

Importance of Education in Agricultural Development

Agricultural education in Nigeria encompasses a range of formal and informal training programs aimed at equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to thrive in the agricultural sector. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) outlined an overview of these programs in 2019, emphasizing the importance of education in building human capital, fostering innovation, and enhancing productivity in agriculture (Adeniyi and Akande, 2018).

Formal agricultural education in Nigeria includes academic institutions such as universities, colleges, and vocational training centers offering degree programs, diplomas, and certificates in various agricultural disciplines. These institutions provide theoretical and practical training in agronomy, animal husbandry, agribusiness, agricultural engineering, and other related fields, thereby preparing graduates for careers in agriculture and agribusiness.

In addition to formal education, informal training programs

play a vital role in agricultural capacity building in Nigeria. These programs, often organized by government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based organizations, aim to impart practical skills and knowledge to farmers, agripreneurs, and rural youths through workshops, field demonstrations, and extension services. Informal training programs are particularly crucial for smallholder farmers and rural communities, enabling them to adopt modern farming techniques, improve productivity, and access markets more effectively.

Education plays a pivotal role in driving agricultural development by building human capital, fostering innovation, and enhancing productivity in the sector. Well-educated individuals are better equipped to adopt new technologies, adapt to changing market demands, and innovate in agricultural practices, leading to increased yields, improved livelihoods, and sustainable development.

However, agricultural education in Nigeria faces several challenges, including outdated curricula, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of qualified teachers, as noted by Ibrahim in 2021. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive reforms, including curriculum revision to align with current industry needs, investment in infrastructure such as laboratories and demonstration farms, and professional development opportunities for agricultural educators.

Despite these challenges, there are ample opportunities for improving agricultural education in Nigeria. Leveraging information and communication technologies (ICTs) can enhance access to educational resources and facilitate distance learning programs. Public-private partnerships can also play a crucial role in funding and implementing agricultural education initiatives, while internships and apprenticeships can provide practical training and hands-on experience for students and aspiring agripreneurs.

Agricultural Education as a Catalyst for Job Creation

The linkages between agricultural education and employment opportunities span across various sectors within the agricultural value chain, as outlined by Ogunlela *et al.*, 2022. Individuals with agricultural education backgrounds find employment opportunities in agribusiness, farming, research, and extension services, among others.

In agribusiness, agricultural education equips individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to establish and manage successful agricultural enterprises. Graduates with backgrounds in agricultural economics, agribusiness management, and marketing play crucial roles in value chain development, market analysis, and business planning, thus creating employment opportunities for themselves and others within the

sector.

In farming, agricultural education fosters innovation and best practices in crop and livestock production, enabling farmers to improve yields, reduce post-harvest losses, and adopt sustainable agricultural practices. Graduates with expertise in agronomy, animal husbandry, and agricultural engineering contribute to increased productivity and profitability in farming operations, thereby generating employment for farmworkers and rural communities.

In research, agricultural education prepares individuals for careers in agricultural research institutions, universities, and private sector companies involved in agricultural research and development (R&D). Researchers with backgrounds in agronomy, plant breeding, soil science, and agricultural biotechnology drive innovation in crop improvement, pest management, and soil fertility, leading to increased agricultural productivity and competitiveness.

In extension services, agricultural education plays a crucial role in training extension agents and advisors who work directly with farmers to disseminate information, technology, and best practices. Extension workers with expertise in agricultural education and communication facilitate technology transfer, provide technical assistance, and support farmer education and training programs, thereby enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainability at the grassroots level.

Furthermore, success stories abound of individuals and communities benefiting from agricultural education initiatives such as increase income, food security, empowerment, environmental conservation, community development and access to market, as highlighted by Olayiwola and Olatunji in 2020. These initiatives empower farmers with the knowledge and skills needed to improve their livelihoods, increase their incomes, and enhance food security in their communities. From training programs on sustainable agriculture to capacity-building workshops on agribusiness management, agricultural education initiatives contribute to poverty alleviation and rural development across Nigeria.

Moreover, the potential for entrepreneurship and value chain development in agriculture to generate employment opportunities spans the rural-urban continuum, as emphasized by Adeoye et al. in 2021. By promoting entrepreneurship and value addition in agriculture, agricultural education fosters economic growth and job creation not only in rural areas but also in urban centers through agro-processing, marketing, and distribution activities.

Therefore, agricultural education plays a pivotal role in creating employment opportunities and driving economic development across various sectors within the agricultural value chain. By equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and entrepreneurial mindset needed to succeed in agriculture,

agricultural education contributes to poverty reduction, food security, and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Policy Recommendations

The integration of agricultural education into national development strategies and education policies is essential for promoting sustainable agricultural development and fostering economic growth. The Federal Ministry of Education outlined the significance of this integration in 2020, recognizing agriculture as a critical sector for national development and emphasizing the need to incorporate agricultural education into the mainstream education system.

One aspect of this integration involves investment in infrastructure, technology, and extension services to support agricultural education and innovation, as highlighted by Adegbola et al., 2023. Adequate infrastructure, such as well-equipped laboratories, demonstration farms, and research facilities, is essential for providing hands-on training and practical experience to students in agricultural institutions. Additionally, investment in agricultural technology and extension services facilitates the adoption of modern farming techniques, promotes innovation, and enhances productivity across the agricultural value chain.

Furthermore, collaboration between government, academia, industry, and civil society is crucial for promoting skills development and entrepreneurship in agriculture, as advocated by Oyelaran-Oyeyinka & Lal in 2019. Government agencies, educational institutions, agricultural research organizations, private sector companies, and civil society organizations can collaborate to design and implement agricultural education programs that align with industry needs, foster entrepreneurship, and promote job creation in the agricultural sector.

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) play a significant role in leveraging resources, expertise, and networks to support agricultural education initiatives. By partnering with industry stakeholders, educational institutions can access funding, internships, mentorship opportunities, and technical expertise to enhance the quality and relevance of agricultural education programs. Similarly, collaboration between academia and industry facilitates knowledge exchange, technology transfer, and research-commercialization linkages, leading to innovation and value creation in agriculture.

Moreover, government policies and incentives can promote the integration of agricultural education into national development strategies and education policies. By incorporating agricultural education into school curricula, vocational training programs, and higher education institutions, governments can ensure that students at all levels receive adequate exposure to agricultural concepts, practices, and career opportunities. Additionally,

governments can provide scholarships, grants, and loans to support students pursuing agricultural education and encourage private sector investment in agricultural training and capacity-building initiatives.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, agricultural education is a powerful tool for addressing unemployment, driving economic development, and building a more resilient and prosperous Nigeria. It is imperative that policymakers, educators, and stakeholders prioritize investments in agricultural education and collaborate to ensure its success. By doing so, Nigeria can harness the transformative potential of agriculture to create a brighter future for its citizens and contribute to sustainable development regionally and globally.

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