

Assessment of Agricultural Practical Year Training Programmes of Nigeria Universities in The South Western States

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ABSTRACT

The study evaluates practical year training programmes in selected Universities in Southwest, Nigeria. Two hundred and twelve students (212) were randomly selected from three stratified universities based on types I, II and III. Chi-square, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Analysis of Variance were used in analyzing the data.

The results showed that majority of the students were within the age range of 24-25 years (31.6%) with a mean age of 25 years. More than half of the students (58.5%) were males. Most of the students were involved in crop and animal production activities (98.1%) and (93.4%) respectively. Students reported inadequate transport facilities, lack of storage facilities, poor funding of the programme and inadequate farm equipment as some of the problems faced during the programme. However, most (58.5%) of the respondents agreed that the programme is effective. There was no significant relationship between students' assessment of practical year training programme and age, sex ($\chi^2=2.97$, $p>0.05$) and marital status ($\chi^2=0.20$, $p>0.05$). There was a significant difference in students' assessment of the programme across the selected universities for livestock production ($F=4.01$, $p<0.05$), marketing activities ($F=14.51$, $p<0.05$), processing activities ($F=16.86$, $p<0.05$), extension services ($F=9.91$, $p<0.05$), but there was no significant difference for crop production ($F=0.54$, $p>0.05$).

Key Words: Assessment, Practical, Training, Programme

BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO THE STUDY

The farm practical programme is a training programme incorporated into the curriculum of agricultural students in the Nigerian Universities. The primary purpose is to expose students to practical knowledge of what they learnt in the classroom and to apply such on the farm. Although, the farm practical programme is being addressed differently in many of these universities, the aims, objectives and activities that are being carried out in the training programme are virtually the same. In the University of Ibadan, the training programme is popularly referred to as practical year training programme (PYTP), while at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, it is being referred to as internship training programme (ITP). However, there is little

variation in the duration expended by students in the different universities.

Farm practical programme was introduced as a result of the significant role that adequate training of the active labour force in agricultural production can achieve in transforming the agricultural sector. With the direct and indirect impact of the importance of the role of agriculture to the development of the economy of any nation, Ojo and Ajibefun (2000) pointed out that the role of improved technology is only considered higher when labour force is more educated.

Lack of skilled and knowledgeable agricultural workers to play the role of a catalyst in the agricultural development process in the rural areas is one of the main problems for agricultural development in Nigeria. It is essential to transfer new agricultural know how to rural

farmers to accelerate the agricultural production. New agricultural technology transfer is one of the major variables for the enhancement of agricultural production. It is essential for any agricultural worker to have the capacity for technology transfer. Similarly, he or she should have the capacity of coordinating the other services such as input supply, credits, marketing, farmer training etc. Demonstration of practical agricultural activities therefore, is one of the key strategies to ensure sustainable agricultural development and this is only possible when proper attention is given to knowledge and skills required to impact training to farmers who are the end-users. According to Breth and Dowsell (2004), many useful technologies have been generated by national and international agricultural research institutes in collaboration with the universities. Within the last decade, serious efforts had been made to make Nigeria self-sufficient in food production by organizations and institutions within the nation of which the Universities are not left out (Ajayi and Anyanwu, 1999).

In Nigeria, the importance of highly trained manpower has long been recognized and this has formed a significant part of the agricultural development policies and strategies since independence (Omotayo and Arokoyo, 1992). Human resources development in agriculture started at Moor Plantation Ibadan in 1921 and Sumaru in 1931, while others were later established at Akure, Umudike and Kabba by the former western, eastern and northern regional governments respectively. These schools were mainly concerned with the training of agricultural assistants and superintendents for the extension services and for the few research institutes in the country. A lot of achievements have since been recorded in the area of agricultural manpower training especially since independence (Omotayo and Arokoyo, 1992).

The Student's Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is one of the ways of training agricultural students that will eventually teach farmers improved practical agricultural activities. The SIWES is the accepted skill training programme that forms part of the approved minimum academic standard in agricultural sciences for all Nigerian Universities. The specific objectives of

the SIWES as enshrined in the job specification for agriculture in all Nigerian Universities are to provide students the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge in real work situation by bridging the gap between University work and actual practice and provide an avenue for students to acquire skills and experience in their course of study. It is through the scheme that agricultural students derive occupational skills required for the volume of work in agriculture. Educational intervention strategies that will encourage university students to make agricultural based jobs their professional fields should be put in place.

Despite these opportunities given to the young undergraduates in the nation's Universities to become self-reliant, employers of labour and contributing positively towards agricultural development, an increase in food production in the country has not been achieved. Most of the graduates of agriculture seek employment in other areas of the economy like banks, oil companies, insurance, etc. also, Soladoye (2000) and Okeleye (2002) found out that most of the graduates of agriculture have sought employment in other areas where they are not professionally trained and thus less productive.

The difference in pattern of farm practical programme in the nation's universities requires the need to assess the perception or opinion of the students about the programme, whether the farm practical programme is effective in bringing about the desired change which was reason for its inclusion in the curricula of the nation's universities and faculties of agriculture.

- i. What are the students' perceptions about the duration of the programme?
- ii. What are the students' perceptions about the theoretical component of the programme?
- iii. What are the students' perceptions about the practical component of the programme?
- iv. Do the students derive any benefits from the farm practical programme?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of the study was to evaluate university students' participation in practical year training programme in South Western Nigeria.

Specific objectives

- The study was specifically designed to:
- (i) describe the demographic characteristics of the students;
 - (ii) ascertain students perception about the theoretical component of the programme.
 - (iii) determine students perception about the practical component of the programme;
 - (iv) ascertain the benefits that students derive from the programme;

METHODOLOGY

Area of study

The study was carried out in the South Western area of Nigeria, which has eight states namely Delta, Edo, Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo and Lagos. The study area lies between latitudes 5⁰ and 9⁰ North and longitudes 2⁰ and 8⁰ East. It is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean in the south, Kwara and Kogi States in the north, Eastern Nigeria in the east and Republic of Benin in the west. It has a land area of 114,271 square kilometers. The vegetation ranges from the swamp forest in the southern coast to Derived

Savannah in the north. The rain and deciduous forest lies between the two vegetation belts. Rainfall ranges from 300mm in the coastal area to 200mm in the extreme northern parts. The population of the area according to 2006 census is 22,330,670. In this area 65% of the people live in the rural area (FDA, 1997) with agriculture as their main source of livelihood.

Study population

The study population consists of 500 level students of the faculties of agriculture who had gone through the farm practical year programme in the selected universities.

Sampling procedure and sample size

A multi-stage random sampling procedure was used for this study. The steps involved are:

- 1) Stratification of the university(s) based on the faculty of Agriculture.
- 2) Random selection of universities from each stratum and
- 3) Random selection of respondents (500L students) from the selected universities.

The summary of the selection procedure is represented on the table below.

Stratum	University(s) with faculty of Agriculture.	Type	Selected Universities	Students enrolment	25% of the enrolment
1	U.I LAUTECH, & UNAD	Type I	U. I.	185	46
2	OAU & OOU	Type II	O. A. U	149	37
3	UNAAB	Type III	UNNAB	536	129
Total				870	212

- UI- University of Ibadan
- LAUTECH- Ladoke Akintola University
- UNAD- University of Ado-Ekiti
- OAU- Obafemi Awolowo University
- OOU- Olabisi Onabanjo University
- UNAAB- University of Agriculture, Abeokuta

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

TABLE 1
Distribution of respondents according to age

Age (years)	U. I. (%)	UNAAB (%)	O. A. U (%)
20-21	3(6.5)	10(7.8)	10(27.03)
22-23	23(50.0)	13(10.0)	13(35.14)
24-25	4(8.7)	57(44.2)	6(16.22)
26-27	7(15.2)	19(14.7)	6(16.22)
28-29	9(19.6)	21(16.3)	2(5.40)
30-31	-	7(5.4)	-
32-33	-	2(1.6)	-

TABLE 2
Respondents' distribution according to sex

Sex	U. I (%)	UNAAB (%)	O. A. U (%)	Total (%)
Male	22(47.8)	82(63.7)	20(54.1)	124(58.49)
Female	24(52.2)	43(33.3)	17(45.9)	84(39.62)

Result of analysis on Table 1 shows that the mean age of the respondents was 25 years. This means that majority (31.6%) of the respondents were in the age range of between 24-25 years. This is true for U.I., UNAAB and O.A.U. The reason could be due to the fact that agricultural science courses in Nigerian Universities spans 5 years and respondents are not admitted until they are 18 years of age.

In Table 2, 58.5% of respondents were male while 39.6% were females. Across universities, the ratio of male to female respondents is higher. This corroborates the findings of Agbebaku (2004) and the reason for this could be as a result of the drudgery associated with agriculture which male alone can cope with and the psychological belief that agriculture is for males.

TABLE 4
Distribution of respondents according to first choice of course of study

First choice of course of study	U. I. (%)	UNAAB (%)	O. A. U (%)	Total (%)
Medical science	21(45.7)	30(23.3)	31(83.8)	82(38.68)
Engineering	4(8.7)	30(23.3)	-	34(16.04)
Pharmacy	9(19.6)	-	2(5.4)	11(5.19)
Agriculture	9(19.6)	64(49.6)	4(10.8)	77(30.32)

Table 4 above reveals that 38.6% of the respondents had medical sciences as their first choice of course of study. These include courses like human medicine, veterinary medicine, biochemistry and microbiology, while 16.0% of the respondents had engineering courses like civil engineering, chemical engineering, etc, as the first choice of course of study. About 5.2% of the respondents had pharmacy as their first choice of course of study. This means that 59.9% of the respondents did not choose agriculture as their first choice of career. Only 30.3% of the respondents choose agriculture as their first choice of course of

study. This is also in agreement with the findings of Bosoro (2003), that young people (youths) aspire to pursue courses like medicine and engineering than agriculture. This implies that majority (59.9%) of new entrants into the universities in the country do not have interest in agriculture, because of the perceived negative thought that agriculture is punishment for offenders as reported by Zhiri (1998) and Ogunrinde (2002). This could have an adverse effect on the development of agricultural sector and its contribution to the nation's economy.

TABLE 5
Distribution of respondents according to the activities involved in during Practical Year Training Programme.

Activities	U. I (%)	UNAAB (%)	O. A. U (%)	Total (%)
Crop production	43(93.5)	128(99.2)	37(100)	208(98.1)
Livestock production	32(69.5)	129(100)	37(100)	198(93.4)
Processing activities	29(63.0)	107(82.9)	37(100)	171(80.7)
Marketing activities	43(93.5)	46(35.7)	37(100)	126(59.4)
Extension services	17(37.0)	124(96.1)	31(83.8)	172(81.1)

Table 5 shows that 98.1% of the respondents were involved in crop production, 93.39% in livestock production, 80.7% in processing activities, while 81.1% and 59.43% were involved in

extension services and marketing activities respectively. This implies that majority 98.1% and 93.3% of the respondents were involved in crop production and livestock production, while 80.66% and 81.13%

were involved in processing and extension service respectively. The implication of this is that students were mostly introduced to crop and livestock production in the course of their practical year training programme.

TABLE 6
Distribution of respondents according to benefits derived from Practical Year Training Programme

Benefit derived	U. I.	UNAAB	O. A. U.	Total
Skill in animal production				
Great benefit	7(15.2)	96(74.5)	6(16.2)	109(51.42)
Average benefit	34(73.9)	23(17.8)	24(64.8)	81(38.21)
Low benefit	5(10.9)	8(6.2)	5(13.5)	18(8.49)
No benefit	-	2(1.6)	2(5.4)	4(1.89)
Skill in crop production				
Great benefit	33(71.7)	35(27.1)	6(16.2)	74(34.90)
Average benefit	11(23.9)	87(67.5)	27(73.4)	125(58.96)
Low benefit	1(2.2)	5(3.9)	4(10.8)	10(4.72)
No benefit	1(2.2)	2(1.6)	-	3(1.42)
Skill in marketing activities				
Great benefit	12(26.1)	21(16.3)	8(21.6)	41(19.34)
Average benefit	29(63.0)	87(67.5)	25(67.5)	141(66.51)
Low benefit	4(8.7)	11(8.5)	2(5.4)	17(8.02)
No benefit	1(2.2)	10(7.8)	2(5.4)	13(6.13)
Skill in processing activities				
Great benefit	5(10.9)	84(65.1)	11(29.7)	100(47.17)
Average benefit	30(65.3)	24(18.6)	26(70.3)	80(37.74)
Low benefit	4(8.7)	17(13.2)	-	21(9.91)
No benefit	7(15.2)	4(3.1)	-	5.19(18.3)
Skill in extension services				
Great benefit	6(13.0)	27(20.9)	11(29.7)	44(20.75)
Average benefit	32(69.6)	91(70.6)	20(54.0)	143(67.45)
Low benefit	2(4.3)	9(7.0)	6(16.2)	17(8.02)
No benefit	6(13.0)	2(1.6)	-	8(3.77)

Table 6 above shows that majority of the respondents derived benefits from crop production (98.6%) of livestock (98.12%) production as well as extension service (96.2%) and processing activities (94.8%). This could be

because the students were mostly exposed to crop and livestock production activities as well as processing and extension services. About 94.0% derived benefit in terms of skill acquisition and knowledge from marketing activities (93.9%)

TABLE 7
Distribution of respondents according to problems faced during practical Year Training Programme

Problems	U.I (%)	UNAAB (%)	O.A.U (%)	Total (%)
Lack of fund	42(91.)	108(83.7)	35(94.6)	185(87.26)
Inadequate experience instructors	2(4.3)	18(14.0)	13(35.1)	33(15.57)
Shortage of farm space	6(13.0)	26(20.2)	2(5.4)	34(16.4)
Poor yield	32(69.6)	35(27.1)	31(83.8)	98(46.23)
Transportation problem	41(89.2)	115(89.2)	35(94.6)	181(90.09)
Lack of storage facilities	41(89.1)	103(79.9)	24(64.8)	168(79.25)
Inadequate farm equipment	30(65.3)	109(79.9)	29(78.4)	168(79.25)
Infection among farm animals	6(13.0)	33(25.6)	10(27.0)	49(23.11)

TABLE 8
Analysis of variance of the benefits derived by the students in three selected Universities Practical Year Training

		Sum of square	df	F	Sig.	Decision
Crop benefit	Between Groups	21.611	2	0.542	0.582	NS
	Within Groups	4167.634	209			
	Total	4189.245	211			
Livestock benefit	Between Groups	151.581	2	4.013	0.019	Sig.
	Within Groups	1946.886	209			
	Total	4098.467	211			
Marketing benefit	Between Groups	497.930	2	14.510	0.000	Sig.
	Within Groups	3585.933	209			
	Total	4083.863	211			
Processing benefit	Between Groups	595.082	2	16.863	0.000	Sig.
	Within Groups	3687.649	209			
	Total	4282.731	211			
Extension benefit	Between Groups	363.853	2	9.914	0.000	Sig.
	Within Groups	3835.368	209			
	Total	4199.222	211			
Total benefit score	Between Groups	5217.032	2	7.399	0.001	Sig.
	Within Groups	73678.156	209			
	Total	78895.189	211			

Problems Encountered in Practical Year Training Programme

Problems encountered by respondents as shown in Table 7 range from transportation (90.09%), lack of fund (87.26%) and lack of storage facilities (79.25%) poor yield (46.23%) and inadequate farm equipment (79.25%). Other problems include infection among farm animals (23.11%), shortage of space (16.04%) and inadequate experienced instructors (15.57%). This may leave a negative thought on students taking up agriculture as a career, therefore, cause a decline in the development of agriculture and decrease in food production when the active labour force are not engaging in agriculture production.

Table 8 shows that there is a significant difference in the benefit derived from crop production activities in the three selected universities practical year training programme, however, there is significant difference in the benefits derived from livestock activities, marketing activities, processing activities and extension activities across the three selected universities practical year training programme.

This could be as a result of the difference in pattern and duration of the practical year training programme in the three selected universities. Some universities allow the students to spend the whole academic session for the practical programme while some spend only six months for the practical year training programme. In some of the universities, the students are allowed to spend part of the practical year programme in related

agriculture firms while in some the students work on the university farm for whole duration of the programme. This may account for the difference in the benefit derived by the students in the three selected universities practical year training programme.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the empirical findings from the study the following conclusions can be drawn.

- Major activities involved in by students during practical year training programme were crop and livestock production.
- Constraints faced include transportation, lack of storage facilities, inadequate farm equipment to work within the farm, poor yield and infection among farm animals.
- Students derived benefits from the practical year training programme, more of these benefits is derived from crop and livestock

RECOMMENDATIONS

To make the practical year training programme to be more effective, the following recommendations should be adopted by the stakeholders involved in the training.

- Proper orientation and planning of the practical year training programme activities with provision for flexibility in the outlined programme to be drawn before commencement of the programme.
- Proper funding of all areas in practical year training programme.

- Establishment of standard mechanized farms in various universities with in faculty of agriculture.
- Government should professionalize agriculture like other courses such as engineering, veterinary medicine, accountancy etc.

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