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Curriculum Implications of Gender Issues in Sustainable Food Production in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
There is a number of gender issues in the interface of extension personnel and farmers, especially as it concerns women farmers and poor households. As a result, both male and female rural farmers have limited access to knowledge and skills, technologies, market information and other important agricultural services. Curriculum implications of sustainable food production in Nigerian schools are being observed through the objectives of agricultural education, problems of agricultural education and prospects of agricultural education in Nigeria. There are recommendations on the ways to solve the problems of gender issues in sustainable food production.

Keywords: Gender, Food Production, Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture, since independence, has been a major contributor to the Nigeria economy. Women provide a large proportion of the labour in agricultural production. The need to provide small holder farmers who are predominantly women with gender friendly technologies to reduce drudgery cannot be over emphasized. In general, land ownership is very low among women, a factor that limits their ability to exploit land-based livelihood strategies. It affects their ability to access finance by using land as collateral property, which often delays investment decisions or reduces the earning potential of agriculture. There are a number of gender issues in the interface of extension personnel and farmers, especially as it concerns women farmers and poor households. As a result both male and female farmers have limited access to knowledge and skills, technologies, market information and other important agricultural services. The Gender Policy in Agriculture serves as a road map that indicates how addressing gender gap in agriculture development can be optimized to maximize the impact on food security. This policy further underscores the vital role of agriculture in sustainable development and its importance in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls (SDG-5). Women face lots of discrimssination both in seeking education and job and face similar fate even at home within the household, yet women are mostly responsible for preparing meals and taking care of the children. In this paper,

the following were addressed; concept of sustainable development, gender and agriculture, gender gaps in agriculture, challenges to achievement of gender gap policy, curriculum implications of gender issues in sustainable food production, recommendations and conclusions.

Concept of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is defined by the World Commission on Environment Development (WCED) as follows 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED, 1987). The concept of sustainable development requires balancing environmental, societal and economic considerations in the pursuit of development. Sustainability includes generation of equity, natural resource conservation, environmental preservation and restoration. With the above definition, the WCED aim to address the growing concern 'about the accelerating deterioration of the human environment and natural resources and the consequences of that deterioration for economic and social development.' Min essence, it is to reduce negative environmental impact and improve the quality of life of people.

Gender and Agriculture

Agriculture is one of the most widespread activities in the world and has a crucial role in food production, environmental protection, landscape preservation, rural employment and food security. From a gender point of view, there are significant gaps between women and men (Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development DG AGRI, 2012). For example, women farm holders have significantly smaller farms than men farm holders. Moreover, the share of female farm holders is particularly high on farms with no clear specialization in livestock rearing or crop production. Women play a key role in rural families, communities and economies, and they are also important as farmers. In addition to paid farm work, women still assume the main share of unpaid responsibilities involved in the running of families and communities. There is also under-reporting of women's work, as women tend to classify and report themselves as not in employment, particularly when undertaking unpaid agricultural work. In fact, women provide a large proportion of the labour of agricultural production, even though official statistics based on census and survey instruments often underestimate women's work and its contribution to national wealth.

Gender Gaps in Nigerian Agriculture

Focusing gender disparities on the following premises make clear the existing gender gaps in agriculture: crop intensification, livestock production, fishers and aquaculture, extension services, climate change, quality assurance, access to inputs, ICT, commodity value chain development and Institutional set up.(Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Abuja, 2016)

The livelihood challenge is as much about access to land as it is about obtaining the means to use the land. In rural Nigeria, land ownership is one of the key limiting factors of production among female farmers. Land access is severely curtailed by the way land is inherited and owned in most patrilineal ethnic groups, especially in Southern Nigeria. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) Core Welfare Indicators Survey as reported by Nigeria Gender Report (2012) show gender disaggregated land control, access and ownership patterns by location and region. Although women represent between 60%

and 79% of Nigeria's rural labour force, males are five times more likely to own land than females. In general, land ownership is very low among women, a factor that limits their ability to exploit land-based livelihood strategies. It affects their ability to access finance by using land as collateral property, which often delays investment decisions or reduces the earning potential of agriculture. Land ownership in urban areas shows a similar pattern as in rural areas; men are five times more likely to own land than women. Lack of land ownership among women in urban areas has implications not only for shelter, security and access to services but also for wealth creation, because many urban micro-enterprises use homes as a staging post. Women's access to land, a key productive asset, is limited by patrilineal inheritance (from father to son), traditional authority structures that tend to give men decision-making control over women in all spheres of life. Although the Nigeria Land Administration Act is egalitarian on paper, further work is required to operationalize the Act to make it functional in practice. The ecological zones in Nigeria are also very diverse with the semi-arid Sudan (Sahel) zone, Guinea Savannah and Derived Savannah zone as well as Forest and Mangrove (high rainfall, moist sub-humid and very high humidity) zone. A few variations exist within each ecological zone. The ecology and trends in precipitation in a region determines what kind of farming system the people will practice, their food preference and how they make use of natural resources in their environment (Azih, 2008) (Aregheore, 2011).

Knowledge and skills in crop farming are key capacities in the crop intensification programme. Lack of skills was the reason for non- adoption or low rate of adoption of new technologies by Women Headed-Households and poor families. Women and youths from all types of households have limited access to trainings meant to enhance their knowledge and skills in crop production. At the household level, male members of households, attend trainings more than women because information on opportunities comes through the men, who in many cases keep the information for their benefit Women controls small stock, like goats, chickens and rabbits as individuals or jointly with their husbands and children.

There are a number of gender issues in the interface of extension personnel and farmers, especially as it concerns women farmers and poor households. As a result both male and female farmers have limited access to knowledge and skills, technologies, market information and other important agricultural services. There are very few women who take up science subjects and this also affects agriculture extension service delivery. Male extensions workers find it easy relating with male farmers and as a result, male farmers (especially the well to do ones) mainly benefit from agricultural extension activities.

There is inadequate fund. There is no adequate fund for the provision of conducive and enabling environment to facilitate the effective teaching and learning process as well as research. Tertiary institutions are statutorily expected to be engaged in research to enrich the process of societal development and not to be engaged in teaching only (Ebong 2008).This expectations are not adequately met due to inadequate fund as research in agriculture requires huge investments and capital which individuals cannot cope. The bureaucratic delay in the release of fund has also affected research effort. Research institutions rarely focus on developing gender sensitive agriculture technologies. Women in agriculture often find themselves with technologies that are not gender friendly, for example, sizes of some agricultural machinery are too big for women to operate. Practical needs and gender interests are also not researched.

Challenges to Achievement of Gender Gaps Policy in Agriculture

There are a number of anticipated challenges to the achievement of the goals of gender policy for the agricultural sector. Some of these include:

- Lack of political will to effectively challenge the status quo through adequate implementation of the policy;
- Sustenance of the well- entrenched patriarchal cultures and traditions including traditions on land ownership;
- Inadequacy of gender disaggregated data to expose the negative impacts of gender biases on agricultural production so as to enable policy to uproot the malaise;
- Poor monitoring and evaluation of the policy implementation;
- Poor resources mobilization.

Understanding the following reasons why gender equality must be addressed in agriculture is important for sustainability and food security:

- First, gender dimension is crucial for economic reasons and from the efficiency point of view. This is especially true in the agricultural sector, where gender inequalities in access to and control over resources are persistent, undermining a sustainable and inclusive development of the sector.
- Second, equity or distributional issues are related to gender differences in outcomes. Gender differences, arising from the socially constructed relationship between men and women, affect the distribution between them and cause many disparities in development outcomes.
- Third, gender roles and relations affect food security and household welfare, critical indicators of human development.
- Last, but not the least, gender equality is a basic human right guaranteed under the 1999 Nigerian Constitution and international human rights laws. Food security is not just a goal of sustainable agricultural development; it is a basic human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and amplified by Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Women also have the right to be equal partners in the agricultural sector, and to that end, the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) protects women's rights to equal access to land, credit, and income.

Curriculum Implications of Gender Issues in Sustainable Food Production in Nigerian Schools

Objectives of Agricultural Education

The major objectives of agricultural education in Nigeria are:

i. To provide the youth with sound knowledge of the basic principles and techniques of agriculture and the motivation with which they can translate this knowledge into real improvement in agricultural productivity.
ii. To preserve those aspects of culture which are in line with modern farming methods while changing those which are obsolete with regards to taking into consideration, the importance of tradition and customs within the rural community.
iii. To provide the farmer with the knowledge upon which to base the rural community.

iv. To help the rural farmers develop an understanding of the inter-relationships of urban and rural life.
v. To provide training to specialist in agricultural occupations such as livestock, horticulture, food storage and processing as well as insurance and financing.
vi. To provide counseling on agricultural occupations and means of preparing for them.
vii. To produce adequate trained personnel involved in extension services for farmers, translating research findings into field trials and then into commercial applications(Minimum Standard for NCE Teachers, 2008).

To achieve the above listed objectives which are aimed at the development of functional agriculture and acquisition of knowledge for a sustainable increase in agricultural production, there is need to assess the problems and prospects of agricultural education in Nigeria.

Problems and Prospects of Agricultural Education in Nigeria

Problems of agricultural education can be viewed from two perspectives-namely the fundamental problems and the emerging global problems.

1. *Fundamental Problems of Agricultural Education in Nigeria are:*

a. The Pre-tertiary Level: In Nigeria, teachers who teach Agricultural Science in most secondary schools are trained in agriculture without any background in education or post- graduate training in education. Agricultural topics are taught as biology in schools without any due translation to practical use for production. This discourages favorable attitudes of the youths who should be encouraged to take up farming as their occupation. The major aim of Agricultural Education for the youth in school is to expose them to various occupations in agriculture and prepare them for such occupations. Aghimen and Nosa, (2001)
b. Lack of Proper Curriculum Development: Agricultural education has not been given an appropriate place in Nigeria school curriculum. Nigerian tertiary institutions are believed to be well-armed with adequate curricula and technical know-how to teach Agricultural Science. There is a breakdown in the link between what is taught, agricultural labour market and the needs of the farmers; hence Ibrahim (2012) observed that the education of agricultural graduates is not commercial sector's need oriented.
c. Lack of Good Quality Teachers: Teacher quality has a strong bearing on societal survival since the quality of education in any society depends on the quality of its teachers. In any nation, agricultural development depends to a large extent, on the quality of Agricultural Science teachers which is also dependent on their professional and pedagogical competence.
d. Poor Method of Instruction: Demonstration, Project, Questioning, Fieldtrip, Discussion, Assignment and Lecture method are the teaching methods employed in teaching agriculture. Aregheore, 2011). Lecture method is a teaching technique in which a more knowledgeable person (the teacher) supplies information and ideas to the less knowledgeable person (the student). In this teaching method, the teacher dominates the proceedings of the class leaving the students with very little chance for contribution. This method is teacher centered. Most times, this method is devoid of detailed demonstration and eliminates the effective development of competence.
e. Poor Teacher's Motivation: Due to little or no motivation, poor supply of teaching materials, inadequate educational resources, infrastructural facilities and

organizational structure of agricultural learning, there is poor job satisfaction on the part of the teacher. This creates a weak relationship between schools and the world of work, poor quality agricultural educational programmes and poor agricultural teacher preparation programmes,

f. Lack of Consistent Educational Policies: The poor standard of education in Nigeria today resulted from inconsistent educational policies by those in government. The administration of agriculture in Nigeria is the responsibility of Ministry of Agriculture and its agencies. However, the personnel whose appointments were on political basis are untrained and therefore, not capable of translating theoretical ideals into practical reality.
g. Inadequate Fund: There is no adequate fund for the provision of conducive and enabling environment to facilitate the effective teaching and learning process as well as research. Tertiary institutions are statutorily expected to be engaged in research to enrich the process of societal development and not to be engaged in teaching only (Ebong, 2008).This expectations are not adequately met due to inadequate fund as research in agriculture requires huge investments and capital which individuals cannot cope.

2. The Emerging Global Problems

The emerging global problems focuses on two major aspects related to the changing world. They are pace of technology change and environmental factor.

a. The pace of technological change: The pace of change is much faster today compared to the past, especially in the field of agricultural innovations. The extent of this scientific advance allows shorter periods for assimilation (Maguire, 2000). Globally, the aspect of food production process which includes processing, storage and marketing has become increasingly important to agricultural producers to meet the high demands of the changing world and as such, Agricultural Education must take new subject areas and their socioeconomic consequence into consideration.
b. Environmental factors: Environmental factors are concerned with the issues of climate change which results from global warming. This causes impacts on agricultural production and ways of mitigating effects of climate change on agricultural production.

One of the cultural values, Nigeria Agricultural Education is expected to transmit is the learning, training and practice of agriculture (Egun, 2010). It is transformation of the understanding and practice of farming to meet the changing world of the time. A well-structured system of Agricultural Education interprets both vigorous expansion and adaptation to the actual farmer's needs especially in the following areas:

a. Farmers being motivated by being given incentives.
b. Gradual move of subsistence farmers to mechanized farmers, train them and give them subsidy.
c. The move from rain fed agriculture to irrigation farming for a sustainable massive production.
d. Mass Agricultural Education of the farmers on the techniques of conservation as well as agro- ecological agriculture.
e. The training and re-training of extension farmers on improved agricultural practices.
f. Serious utilization of research findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations:

1. Agriculture is one of the most widespread activities in the world and has a crucial role in food production, environmental protection, landscape preservation, rural employment and food security. This can only be met if the Federal Government organizes and have re-orientation of the agricultural policy to suit women and men equally. This will help in boosting sustainable food production.
2. Also, the ministry of agriculture together with educational department should organize curriculum and bring learning outcomes to be gender friendly.
3. Generally, government funding is inevitably important to help in all the sectors of agriculture to function smoothly, for instance in training, extension services, technological upgrading to mention but few.
4. Although women represent between 60% and 79% of Nigeria's rural labour force, males are five times more likely to own land than females. In general, land ownership is very low among women, a factor that limits their ability to exploit land-based livelihood strategies. Women should also be encouraged and supported to own land.

CONCLUSION

There are a number of gender issues in the interface of extension personnel and farmers, especially as it concerns women farmers and poor households. As a result both male and female farmers have limited access to knowledge and skills, technologies, market information and other important agricultural services. Curriculum implications of sustainable food production in Nigerian schools are being observed through the objectives of agricultural education, problems of agricultural education and prospects of agricultural education in Nigeria. There are recommendations on the ways to solve the problems of gender issues in sustainable food production

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