

THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE EDUCATION IN PROMOTING NATIONAL SECURITY

By

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Abstract

Nigeria is presently facing serious security challenges and instability that threaten our corporate existence as people of one destiny. These security challenges include: Boko haram insurgency in the North east and North west, kidnappings, armed banditry, tribal and religious clashes. These security issues are being caused by high rate of poverty, unemployment, political instability and corruption. This paper therefore examines the important roles agricultural education can play in ensuring our national security. Vocational agriculture is a skill acquisition training programme for youth aimed at making them self-employed and self-reliance in agricultural production for empowerment. In addition, we must abide by democratic principles and rule of law in our political life. The roles of agricultural education in ensuring national security are in the areas of reduction in rural-urban migration, youth unemployment and growth in industry. In conclusion government needs to take pro-active security measures to protect lives and property of the citizens for the safety of the nation.

Keywords: Role, Agricultural education, promoting, national security

Introduction

Presently, Nigeria is facing security challenges which threaten the corporate existence and stability of the country. This comes into force in the wake of the increasing terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery, cultism, political thuggery, and above all, tribal and religious clashes. The scale of the insecurity threatens the very fabric of Nigerian society: "With every attack, human lives are lost or permanently damaged." The above scenario has led to the untimely death of over 456,831 innocent lives in Nigeria as of April 2019 (Duru, 2019).

National security is a premise for national economic growth and development of nations. This is because peaceful nations attract foreign investors while the domestic investors freely operate the economy with little or no tensions and apprehensions

(Gbolahan,2023).

In order to ameliorate the incidence of crime, the federal government embarked on the criminalization of terrorism by passing the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2011, fundamental surveillance as well as investigation of criminal related offenses, heightening of physical security measures around the country aimed at deterring or disrupting potential attacks, strengthening of security agencies through the provision of security facilities and the development and broadcast of security tips in mass media (Gbolahan, 2023).

Despite these efforts, the level of insecurity in the country is still high signifying a worsened state of insecurity in the country. With the lingering security challenges and the difficulty of the security apparatus of the government to respond

promptly to attacks on citizenry being the front runner to guarantee safety and security to lives and properties of the citizenry in the country, the question that borders everyone in Nigeria today is “can there be assurance of security?” can people still sleep with their two eyes closed? Is the security of lives and properties achievable? It is evident that government at all levels is confronting the situation head-on and dealing with it decisively even though more effort has to be put in place.

The level of insecurity is on the increase despite huge budgetary allocations to defense in acquiring more military hardware, equipment, in combating insecurity at the detriment of other vital sectors like health, education, and investment in human capital development and programmes. (Alikor, 2022).

Security is a collective responsibility of all citizens of a country in ensuring a secure and peaceful environment for optimal performance in chosen careers for the economic growth and development of Nigeria. A nation's stability is a sine-qua non for foreign investment as well as economic growth and development in all facets of our economy. Therefore, it is obvious that national security is a factor, and sine qua non for any country's economic growth and enhancement (Oladeji and Folorunso, 2007).

Adabara, (2013) affirmed that youth unemployment and poverty are on the increase in Nigeria, with an army of unemployed youths parading the streets in search of limited jobs. He further stressed that this has been responsible for the present security challenges the country is facing. It has also been opined by (Ayodele, 2016) that countries where government is a major employer of labour is bound to face high unemployment rate, Nigeria being a typical example, Kolade (2012) stressed that majority of labor force in Nigeria are unskilled coupled with mass rural- urban migration that tends to exacerbate unemployment situation and worsen security challenges. The Education is a long term investment by the three tiers of government and private individuals for its continued

existence, preservation of culture and traditions, national integration and improvement of the society. The World Bank's (2019) World Development Report on the future of work suggests that flexibility between general and vocational education particularly in higher education is imperative to enable workers to compete in changing labor markets where technology plays an increasingly important role. Development can only be achieved under a peaceful and stable environment in return it can lead to increase in crop yields and livestock production thereby reducing pressures on other natural resources.

Furthermore, labor forces in Nigeria are unskilled coupled with the mass rural-urban migration that tends to compound the unemployment situation and further aggravate security challenges. At present the current national curriculum for Agricultural education at NCE level is faulty and fails to address our present need. Agricultural education is therefore seen as a profession that can address Nigeria present security challenges.

Education for National Security

Education is therefore, an instruction for national development and self-reliance. Suleiman (2013) sees education as a fulcrum of societal civilization and development. He further stressed that a civilized person relates and interacts with one another irrespective of ethnic, religious and cultural differences for national integration. At individual level, people need education for a variety of reasons: firstly, they need it for knowledge acquisition, this will enable them to understand the dynamics of the world and scientific innovations. Secondly, education is desired by many as a medium through which they can acquire professional and vocational skills to qualify for paid employment. Thirdly, education may also be desired for the social status it confers on its recipients. At the national level, education is required for development, integration and national security. The products of our school system should be able to think for themselves, participate meaningfully in the act of decision

making on important national issues and in passing mature judgment on all such matters that affect the security of the country. This is clearly what education attempts to build in the mind of Nigerian youths. This is most important and very necessary in a time when Nigeria is facing security challenges and instability, as well as the polarization of politics along ethnic and religion divides or issues.

In recognition of this, United Nations Sustainable Development Goal advocates the expansion of equitable access to TVET needs in order to substantially increase the number of youths with relevant skills for decent work. Raheem and Ayika (2019). Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is increasingly being viewed as a potential solution to the youth employment crises. TVET's orientation towards the world of work and the acquisition of employable skills means that it is well placed to overcome the skills mismatch issues that have impeded smooth education-to-employment transitions for many young people.

The system of education should be able to produce citizens who are alive their social, political and economic responsibilities to their fatherland. Education should be geared toward imparting the basic principles of modern knowledge on its citizens. The products of the schools should be trained to acquire the ability to adopt such principles in solving their own problems and those of the society at large. Development which is an off shot of education can only be achieved under a peaceful and stable environment, when natural and a manmade resource are effectively utilized in the production of goods and services that impact positively on the people.

The present 6-3-3-4 education curriculum at NCE level should be reviewed, so that it would be more practically oriented and be geared towards skill acquisition. This aspect of education is most crucial to the needs of our youths in this era of violence, militancy, terrorism, kidnapping, political thuggery, poverty and diseases. The only way out of this "hydra headed monster" is to equip

our youths with such skills that will help them to appreciate the opinion of others as people with right to life, as well as be able to cope with problems surrounding them.

Role of Agricultural Education in National Security

Agricultural education as a vocational course plays a vital role in our educational sector. It aimed at exposing students in developing knowledge, practical skills, competences and attitude. It provides the right type of skills that will enable them gain employment in any agricultural related field. Agricultural education can help in promoting national security in the following ways:

• Youth Empowerment

Empowerment is the ability and courage to dive into any challenge without waiting for permission from someone else. It manifests in the drive to take a project, initiative, or crazy idea even when we lack information or resource and the willingness to try, to learn from mistakes, and to be persistent (Babalola & Fasiku,2000). Meaningful empowerment results in positive thinking of individuals about their abilities to understand issues and make changes through notion of self-efficacy, personal control and positive self-image (Iro-Idoro & Jimoh, 2017; Iro-Idoro *et al*, 2015). According to Babalola & Fasiku (2005) youth empowerment should be a deliberate involvement of youth in socio and economic development activities and should result in meaningful change from economic dependence on parents to having productive and economically dispositions with the considerable ability to support oneself and other people. Similarly, Obaseki (2018) opined that a lot of the so-called skills acquisition initiatives in Nigeria are not in tandem with the demands and reality of the labour market and societal needs, hence rendering the youths redundant and mismatch in productive engagements. The main reasons for this ugly trend in youth productive engagement, according to Obaseki (2018), include inconsistency in

policy formulation and implementation and poor planning by those saddled with the responsibilities. When youth are fully engaged they will not be easily recruited to commit heinous crimes and other criminal activities. This will reduce crime to the barest minimum.

• **Reduction in Rural- Urban Migration**

The mass movement of unemployed youth from the rural to urban areas in search of white collar job is of great concern. They are easily recruited and used as tools in promoting insecurity. If these youths are trained in vocational agriculture, with basic skills acquisition in various disciplines in agriculture and necessary assistance, they can become self-reliant. This will reduce rural-urban migration thereby reducing the high rates of insecurity in the country. Angbre,(2016) stressed that engaging youth to acquire relevant vocational skills in agriculture will reduce rural-urban migration.

• **Reduction in youth unemployment**

In Nigeria today, unemployment has deepened into the fabric of the economy and among graduates. This has resulted to increase in crime rate to the society. When youth are taught and acquire the right skills in all the disciplines of agriculture, it makes them become self-employed. They no longer have to be involved in violence. This will drastically reduce insecurity.

• **Self-Reliance in Food Production**

Nigeria can become great in food production if youth put into practice the acquired skills in vocational agriculture. This will make the country self-reliant in food production. Poverty and hunger would be eradicated thus paving way for peace to reign in our country.

• **Industrial Growth**

Agriculture produce raw materials for our industries and its utilization can only be achieved if youth acquire relevant vocational skills, these can go a long way in boosting the economy and creating job opportunities. This can help in reducing security threat of our dear nation.

Conclusion

Agricultural education is a reliable tool in the fight against security challenges in Nigeria. To achieve these objectives, the educational sector should impart relevant practical skill in vocational agriculture and entrepreneurship to meet up with our demands. The challenges been faced are terrorism, armed robbers, kidnappings, violence, thuggery, unknown gunmen, area boys e.t.c. Agricultural education as a vocational course can play a major role is addressing our security challenges.

Above all government should take all necessary measures without fear or favour that will enhance security of lives and property. This can be achieved through democratic principles, adherence to rule of law with equity, fairness and justice.

Recommendations

Agriculture plays an important role in national development which in turn promotes national security. For vocational training in Agriculture to succeed in combating security challenges, the following recommendations are proffered:

- The Government should reinvigorate agricultural sector so as to create more job opportunities.
- Vocational education should be made compulsory at all levels of our tertiary institutions.
- Teachers need to properly equip with necessary skills that are current and up to date so that they will impart same to our youth.
- The Government should provide adequate fund to the security agencies to help tackle the security challenges.
- All citizens should join hands with the government in tackling security challenges.
- Above all government should put in place good policies and create a conducive environment that would engage every citizen in a viable economic activity.

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