

Supervised Agricultural Experience Programmes (SAEP) and Work Linked Education (WLE): Panacea for Empowering Youths and Preventing Joblessness

FAMIWOLE, Remigius O. (Ph.D)

Faculty of Education, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

Abstract

Youths from Nigerian schools and tertiary institutions are usually unemployable after schooling because they are not empowered with the required saleable skills to earn them a job or with which to establish as entrepreneurs. This paper examines the relevance of Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme (SAEP) and Work Linked Education (WLE) as being capable of providing marketable and entrepreneur skills required to prevent joblessness among youths in Nigeria. The strategies for implementing SAEP and (WLE) are recommended for adoption for human capacity building and youth empowerment for national development.

Keywords: Work-linked education, Joblessness, Supervised agricultural experience programmes, Skill development projects, Entrepreneurial education.

Introduction

Joblessness remains one of the most critical challenges facing Nigerian youths today. According to Bakare (2013) most of the nations resources have been left underutilized leading to mass unemployment, joblessness and abject poverty. Joblessness and poverty had been identified as twin evils which experts believe may scuttle the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in the country, if not control (UNESCO, 2000). The National Population Commission (NPC, 2013) reported that the rate of joblessness in Nigeria rose from 21.1 percent in 2010 to 23.9 percent in 2011. Similarly the National Bureau of Statistics, (NBS, 2013) documented that Nigeria's population grew by 3.2 percent in 2011, from 159.3 million people to 164.4 million in 2011, reflecting a rapid population growth. According to National Bureau of Statistics in 2011, Nigeria's unemployment rose to 23.9 percent compared with 21.1 percent in 2010 NBS noted that the labour force swelled by 2.1million to 67, 256, 090 people, with just 51, 224, 115 persons employed, leaving 16, 074, 205 people without work (Okechukwu, 2013).

The NPC recorded the lack of sufficient jobs resulted in additional 2.1 million unemployed person in 2011 up from 1.5million unemployed people produced in 2010. According to the NBS 54 percent of Nigerian youths were unemployed in 2012, females stood at 51.9 percent compared to their male counterpart with 48.1 percent who were unemployed. As reported by Bakare (2013), according to a recent World Bank Statistics, youth unemployment rate is 38 percent, but realistically 80 percent of Nigerians youths are unemployed with secondary school graduates mostly found among the rural population accounting for about half of this figure. The university and polytechnic graduates make up the rest. Despite this large population, more than 150,000 graduates from the nations universities and polytechnics continue to join the streams of jobless youths annually. Yet available jobs remain inadequate, to keep pace with the ever expanding army of job seekers.

It has been noted that Nigeria may not be able to meet the requirements for attainment of the MDGs by 2015 due to the challenges posed by unemployment except drastic and immediate steps are taken to encourage skill development and entrepreneurial education or training in agriculture in Nigerian schools, colleges and tertiary institutions. It has however been observed by Wogu (2013) that no government can meet the demand of creating enough jobs because of the emergency of a new kind of knowledge – based economy, and technological development demanding a new form of organization and new kind of work force different from the industrial man.

It has also been observed that joblessness is global. For example about 30% of U.K. graduates are reported by Adesina (2014) to be without job for more than two years after graduation. According to him job created by some countries around the world includes the following;

Table 1: Percentage job created by some countries around the world

Countries	% Jobs created
United Kingdom (UK)	21%
India	6%
U.S. government	8%

Adesina (2014) Sensitization Workshop on Entrepreneurship at EKSU.

Adesina noted that public sector job creation is relatively low in many countries of the world, hence private sector must grow to create jobs while schools and colleges must develop students entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and attitude. The schools are to guide the students to recognize and develop the commercializable aspects of their course of study. According to Wogu, joblessness in Nigeria means that the jobless have no marketable skills. The concept skills means ability to perform an operation or act well. Hull (1992) defined skill as manual dexterity acquired through the repetitive performance of an act. To possess a skill, according to Okorie and Ezeji (1988), is to demonstrate the habit of

acting, thinking or behaving in a specific way which has become so natural to the individual through repetition or constant practice to the extent that it may become almost automatic.

Linking Classroom Instructions with Skill Development Activities

Famiwole, Bamidele, Oke (2013) remarked that skill development is essential for the development of intrinsic potentials of the youths in school and colleges. In which case, to equip the in-school youths saleable and marketable skills, there is the need to provide vocational guidance to them, to learn by doing through various experiential activities embedded in Supervised Agricultural Experience Programmes and Work-linked type of education. The two programmers have the potential of gearing up the entrepreneurial traits in the students; thereby making them to be creative and innovative in their thinking, attitude and actions. One way of empowering the youths is to rekindle their spirit of creativity so that they will be able to link their education with enterprise development and innovations so as to fully utilize their brains, hands and live-off their ideas. The programmes also link the classroom instructions with practical “hands on experience” where students can ask relative job-related and performance oriented questions to engineer them so as to relate classroom teaching with the world of work, while still in school. For example, the National Policy on Education (2004), stipulated that the quality of instruction in secondary school should be oriented towards skill development and inculcation of competencies necessary for self reliant and youth empowerment.

The concept youth empowerment can be expressed as an attitudinal, structural and cultural process whereby young males and females of the age between 12 and 40 could gain the ability, authority and competency to make decisions and implement change in their lives, that of their peer group and other people including adults. It can also be regarded as a dynamic process of motivating the youths to change structures and ideologies which can make them feel marginalized (Ezugoh, 2009). Youth empowerment programmes therefore provide, the enabling environment to encourage skill development, creativity and the tendency to be entrepreneurs in other to make them to contribute meaningfully to the development of themselves, their localities or the society in which they find themselves, thereby preventing joblessness.

Preventing Joblessness through Skill Development Programmes in Agriculture

Joblessness can be prevented when students are provided with functional and sustainable educational programmes which they can fall back unto for gainful employment after schooling. The major activities involved therein to prevent joblessness is to focus on youth entrepreneurial programmes, youth rights, youth-led skill development activities in agricultural programmes.

The World Education Forum held in partnership with other agencies such as the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) outlined the goals of Education For All (EFA) to include learning and life skills programmes for all youths (UNESCO, 2000). One of the focus of EFA programmes is to encourage a worthwhile education for a large number of youth through skill-development activities so as to reduce unemployment rate among the youths after graduating from schools. (Idowu and Ayanwale, 2009).

Theory versus Practical of Agricultural Science/Education in Schools

For effective implementation of functional and sustainable agricultural education programmes that will prevent joblessness the theory and practice of agriculture must go together (Aghenta, 1988). In which case, agricultural education programmes in schools can only be worthwhile and effective if the youths can boast of worthwhile saleable skills and competencies with which to establish, get sustained and performed effectively on a job after graduation from school. Thus, all teaching and learning processes in agriculture in Nigerian schools need to be carried out to a point where students can learn by doing, acquire saleable skills and experience that can be sold to employers or with which to establish as an entrepreneur after schooling. This is because, for every career or occupation that a graduate will take up after leaving the school, there is a minimum of productive ability and experience which all undergraduates and students must possess in order to be employable or secure worthwhile employment (Okebukola, 2008).

Sustainable agricultural education programmes to prevent joblessness therefore involves more than the use of classroom instructions alone. It includes exposure to practicals and various hands on experience to encourage production oriented agriculture and skill development in agricultural areas. It must also seek to make the curriculum more relevant to the need of the society and students to the extent of empowering the students with skills and competencies, capacity building and increasing their awareness of options in agricultural occupations and career through Supervised Agricultural Education Programmes (SAEP) while in secondary school and Work Linked Education (WLE) at tertiary education level.

Supervised Agricultural Experience Programmes (SAEP) for Capacity Building

Creativity, effective education and human capacity building among youths studying agriculture in schools have to do with structured relationship between classroom instructions in agriculture, Students Industrial Works Experience Programme (SIWES), professional youth organisation in agriculture, agricultural mechanization and Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme (SAEP) (Phipps, 1980, Famiwole and Kolawole, 2012)). Every students in junior schools and those in senior secondary (SS) classes studying Agricultural Science who needs to be empowered are to have viable experience programmes in agriculture that is well supervised.

Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme (SAEP) consist of all planned practical activities conducted outside the school class time, where the students develop and apply agricultural knowledge and skills: SAEP is the heart

of students vocational training in agriculture where students have a splendid opportunity to learn many tasks and competencies through experience and accumulate some experience and skills development in management, feed formulation, livestock feed, farm machinery and technology, agricultural economics, agribusiness and other resources that will assist the students to become established in an agricultural occupation.

SAEP are carried out through the following activities and projects

- (a) Ownership projects
- (b) Placement experience
- (c) Improvement projects and
- (d) Supplementary projects

All SAEP programme are to be well planned. They are mostly secondary schools programme. The plans must be constantly evaluated and if necessary, revised. Records must be kept up to date. The SAEP record books are designed to assist students to determine how well the participants have learned to do certain jobs in their experience programme and to plan their next programme. Student SAEP programme are to be planned in detail for a year. The programme will provides financial and managerial experience and responsibilities. Students SAEP are to be supervised by the vocational agricultural instructor, parents, employers and other adults who are to assist the learner in achieving their educational objectives.

Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme (SAEP) for Entrepreneurship Initiatives

The concept entrepreneurship has to do with the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment, and be able to run or sustain the enterprise successfully. It is the art and science of owning, operating or managing a business and making the right decision at the right time. The role an entrepreneur performs is called entrepreneurial function, while the process is called entrepreneurship.

An entrepreneur according to Otokiti (2014) refers to those type of individuals, having creative and innovative minds as well as enthusiastic nature. They always possess such qualities as foresight, innovative and creative minds, they are very optimistic, positive oriented, they can work independently, they are good managers, committed risk bearer, result oriented, persistent with higher initiative and capable of setting own standard. Entrepreneurs are achievement oriented and always driven to seek new challenges.

Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme are designed to pull out the qualities and characteristics of an entrepreneurs from students right from the secondary school level. The programme equips potential students of agriculture to start, run and manage a small or medium scale agricultural project, under the supervision of an adviser, subject teacher, professionals in the specific agric-business and atimes parents. Students are made to complement the classroom instructions with actual skill development projects on the field, having real agricultural life, so as to be able to ask questions and improved through such activities as exploratory, ownerships, placement and supplementary projects.

Ownership Projects

Ownership projects in SAEP are business ventures for experience and profit. The programmes involve actual students ownership and managerial responsibilities. In students ownership programmes, students are made to own a special project of their own based on their background or interest. Definite business agreements are to be made for securing funds, land, building, equipment and supplies. An essential part of ownership programmes is the keeping, analyzing and using of accurate and complete records; to assist in increasing the efficiency of an enterprise. Ownership programmes are not limited to production agriculture. For example, a student operating a lawn or garden service with an investment in mower, and other tools has an ownership and managerial involvement. The student can own and manage any of these programmes under the supervision of the teacher, subject matter adviser, parents and agro-business experts.

- (i) Moringa farming (ii) Vegetable production (iii) Beef production (iv) Swine production
- (v) Maize production (vi) Turkey production (vii) Grasscutter rearing (viii) Rabbit production
- (ix) Lawn establishment (x) Bee keeping (xi) Poultry production (xii) Lawn mowing or lawn maintenance (xiii) Manure processing (xiv) Game bird production (e.g. Ostrich or Quil Birds Production (xv) Processing of agricultural products like starch and so on

Placement Programmes:

Placement programmes involve placing students on farms agriculture industries, or an agribusiness. The purpose is for the students to learn through first hand information in order to gain relevant experience, knowledge and agric oriented attitude. It is the employers responsibility to provide experiences and on the job instructions that are directly related to the occupation or interest area for which the student is being prepared. In some cases, students may spend part of the regular school days working on the cooperating agribusiness. The remainder of the school days are spent completing the requirement for graduation and attending a vocational agriculture class where related instructions are to be provided. The following competencies maybe considered in evaluating students placement experience.

- (i) Improved practices learned (ii) Management decision discussed or help to make
- (iii) New skills learned (iv) Habits learned (v) Attitudes developed
- (vi) Evidence of honesty and dependability developed
- (vii) Achievements in terms of the training plan

(C) **Improvement Projects**

Students are to be involved in one or two improvement projects each year. Improvement project gives the student an opportunity to gain valuable experience and to contribute to the valuable experience and to contribute to the success of the farm business. They may or may not be on crops or animal. It could be on workshop experience, soil improvement farm machinery and equipment, farm stead improvement or in any sphere of farm work to gain added experience and project improvement purpose.

(D) **Supplementary Farm Experience**

A supplementary farm experience complements the other experiences of the students. For example, a student's class has taught castration of pigs. It is likely that the teacher gives a demonstration and perhaps most of the class members castrated a pig or two. By castrating several pigs, the student will become more skilled in castration. The more castration the students handles the more experience and skilled he or she becomes.

The main purpose of supplementary farm experience is to learn different skill by doing the jobs in an improved way. For example, a student may have learnt in class how to prune a shrub, and the shrubs at home need pruning. By pruning the shrubs, the student improves his/her skill in pruning shrub, and helps beautify the home grounds. The following are some farm jobs where students might have supplementary experience.

- (i) Inoculating soyabeans (ii) Dehorning calves (iii) Testing back fat in pig (iv) Castrating pigs
- (v) Changing oil filter on tractor (vi) Potatoes (vii) Treating cotton seed with chemical dust
- (viii) Stripping tobacco (ix) Repairing barn doors (x) Setting a corner post (xi) Pruning strubs
- (xii) Fertilizing a lawn. (Phipps 1980, Famiwole 1997).

Phipps (1980) and Olaitan (1996) described Supervised Agricultural Experience Programmes as an important part of all learning experience in vocational agriculture. A good SAEP therefore bridges the gap between the school curriculum and the world of work by blending meaningful job experience with related educational courses and learning through doing and the use of Head, Heart and Hand (3Hs). It is the strong vocational educational tool placed in the hands of modern teachers of agriculture to bridge the gap between school work, salable skill development, agricultural occupations and employment to prevent joblessness.

Implementing viable SAEP in Schools

For over 90years, vocational agriculture served thousands of American youths by providing instructions that are necessary for skill development essential to secure and prepare for employment in agricultural occupations through Classroom/Laboratory instructions, Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (a placement programme), Agricultural Mechanization and Engineering, Youth Organizations in agriculture in and outside the school, Supervised Agricultural Experience Programmes.

SAEP Implementation Strategies

The following are the suggested strategies for effective implementation of SAEP in secondary schools.

1. All students at Junior Secondary School and Senior Secondary School levels (most especially those with interest or background in Agriculture Science or farming are to be involved.
2. Exploratory activities such as excursion to established farms, and agric-based industries would be encouraged to motivate the students and increase their awareness of the different opportunities available in Agriculture.
3. Students interest areas in agriculture (Crops, Livestock etc.) would be determined through interest inventory data collection instrument.
4. Students background in farming or farming related experience would also be determined and documented to serve as guide at the counseling or placement stage.
5. Students are to be placed on ownership projects (such as Goat rearing, Pig production, Arable crop production, Poultry management and so on, for ownership and managerial experience.
6. Parent's interest and consent are to be sought by the teachers.
7. Students are to be guided to establish their projects in the school if they are boarders or at home if they are day students.
8. Teachers of Agriculture and instructors are to visit their students projects all year round even during long holidays.
9. All teachers of Agriculture are to be specially remunerated for supervision work carried out especially during the holidays.
10. Students of the same interest e.g. Poultry production, Goat farming, Moringa farming will be meeting at least every fortnight to discuss the prospects and challenges on their ownership projects.
11. Specialists are invited by the supervisor – Teachers to give professional talks to the student on the challenges on their different projects.
12. Students are made to improve their project through excursion and talks from experience agro based specialists. They gain different experience and overcome challenges through interaction with fellow students in the same interest area, their teachers and specialist in agriculture.

13. Students attend local, zonal, state and national exhibitions, conventions and award nights to showcase their products and compete with other students. Awards are given at every level to motivate high performing students.
14. Students grow on their projects through the six years in secondary school. They gain experience as entrepreneurs, make some sales, earn some money and get prepared for greater challenges.
15. Students go on internship for on-the-sport experience to improve on their ownership projects.
16. The youth organization activities of the school are to be structure to complement the SAEP programmes.
17. Students can be on placement programme for a year or two before gaining admission to tertiary institution.

Students SAEP and Work-Linked Education (WLE)

SAEP continue through the Junior Secondary School (JSS) and Senior Secondary School (SSS). By the 6th year in SS3 every students offering agriculture should have acquire a worthwhile experience and competencies which can be built upon to get established on a job or develop upon when they get to tertiary institution through a Work Linked Education (WLE). Any knowledge or education that students cannot apply to everyday job challenges or situation, is not work-linked and not vocational technical oriented, but “wasted education”.

Work-Linked Educational as a Process

Work-Linked Education (WLE), according to Famiwole, Bamidele and Oke (2013) involved the teaching and instructions given to students through job related activities. It is a process whereby teachers effectively relate instructions in the classroom to work; as against strict emphasis on teaching and learning of theoretical principles and abstract concepts only. Thus, Work-Linked Education focuses on equipping students with job-skills and tasks to enable them perform a job efficiently, effectively and successfully (Olaitan, 1996). Work-Linked Education is a process which equips students with skills that are immediately relevant to a particular career or a group of occupation. Most teaching and learning involved in work linked education are emphasize learning by doing and experiential education because they involve the acquisition of manipulative and psycho-productive skills which are essential for making a beginning and advances in an occupation through practice.

In Work-Linked Education, students are place on a job, while still in school, in other to be creative making effective use of their 3H; that is the Heart, Heart and Hand. Work-Linked projects are to be measured by performance-based-tests which give no room for examination indiscipline. Unlike rote learning were achievements are measured by paper and pencil examinations which predispose students to examination malpractice. This is because in evaluating work-linked education, standard are set for students to meet. The teacher would have prepared an assessment instrument either through a rating scale or check-list containing factual data to give accurate measure of what is to be measured (Fatunsin, 1996).

Implementing Work-Linked Education in Schools

Famiwole, et al (2013) presented the following illustrations as a mode of implementation work linked education in schools and colleges.

Step 1: In a class of 25 students, the students may be organized into a group of five each. They may be given a simple one stroke engine to repair and made to work.

Step 2: The engine manual and classroom instructions will be given to each group on how the engine can be dismantled, how to measure and check all the parts and accessories, how to detect the different faults or troubles in the engine, how to correct the identified faults and how to assemble the parts back and make the engine to work.

Step 3: Emphasize are laid on measuring and setting the parts to standard. Note that some of the engines may have different problems or faults, so that even when the students work together, they may not have the tendency to cheat or commit any examination malpractice. Instead, they learn together, ask questions by interaction in other to solve their different problems. They also uphold examination ethnics. Students carry out the practicals while the final products are examined through a checklist and rating scale.

Step 4: Evaluating Work Linked Programmes: Pragmatic assessments are made, Education in which the effective performance of students in the process of learning rather than the product are measured. This approach gives the teachers and students a better knowledge of the level of performance on each competency or task before the final product evolves. Similarly the items on each task can be assessed based on the level of performance expected on a five point rating scale. A careful use of this rating scale is capable of yielding information on student’s level of performance and therefore can be used as a measure of student’s performance and for placement of students on relevant occupations. This process according to Fatunsin (1996) has an advantage over checklist because the checklist only show whether a trait or behaviour is there or not, but the rating scale goes further to show the level of performance or possession of a particular trait. However, the use of checklist can accommodate more students during an assessment period and it is not time consuming. It can also be effective in assessing students during their earlier formative years in skill development process (Fatunsin, 1996).

Checklist shows the rate of progress made by the individual students, or groups in level of performance attained. It also give students the opportunity to practice for a given number of times to achieve the expected standard; without which the individual or group could be declared a failure. This improved mode of evaluation contrary to either pen and pencil examinations or essay type of testing with a strict number of time to answer a given number of question

the conventional method predisposes students to examination malpractice while this method measures actual performance. In the example cited, students' performances are based on measuring the learners' activities by comparing students output with the already set standard. The standards are set with the aim to assess the competency level attained by the learners. Grades may however be assigned to provide information or input for appraisal.

Conclusion

It has been observed that there are mass youth unemployment in the country. Most of the youths graduating from Nigeria schools are roaming the street because some of them are unemployable they lack the required marketable and saleable skills for employment. It has however been established that skill acquisition cannot be visible through the current rote learning or education emphasizing the cognitive domain alone. In the light of the country's fast growing unemployment rate, efforts to create a conducive school environment for skill development and job creation must be redoubled, in order to reverse the dreadful trends. The mechanisms proposed for skill development and creativity-focused programmes are Supervised Agricultural Experience Programmes (SAEP) and Work-Linked Education (WLE) for students in secondary schools and tertiary institutions who are offering agricultural science or courses in agriculture respectively.

Recommendations

- Arising from this study, are the following recommendations
1. All Junior Secondary School and Senior Secondary Schools students studying Agricultural Science should be encouraged to have a Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme of their own.
 2. Work-linked Education should be introduced to all undergraduates in tertiary institutions in the country.
 3. Workshops, conferences, re-training programme and seminars should be organized for all teachers of Agriculture so as to teach Agriculture in secondary schools as a vocational education subject (Agricultural Education).
 4. School calendar, most especially, the long vacation i.e. July to early September should be made use by all teachers of agriculture to train, supervise and advise their students on their ownership placement or improvement programmes.
 5. The Agricultural Science curriculum in secondary schools should be reformed to include the full curriculum contents of Agricultural Education.

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