

SUSTENANCE OF YOUTH ORGANISATION THROUGH A VIABLE SUPERVISED AGRICULTURAL EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME FOR SELF-RELIANCE IN AGRICULTURE

AJIBARE Abike Yemisi¹, Pius Olanrewaju OGUNJOBI² and Bosede Majominoh OWOLABI³

¹Department of Science Education (Agricultural Education Unit),
Faculty of Education, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

²Department of Agriculture and Technology, School of Agriculture and Technology,
Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology,
Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti State Nigeria.

³Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Faculty of Education,
Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State.

Abstract

The paper focuses on the implications of a viable supervised experience programme for youth sustainance in agriculture. The paper highlights the integral parts of the instructions for farming in vocational agriculture. It also identifies the Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme and its importance, which is highly motivational. Also, farming programmes such as production projects, improvement projects, supplementary farm practices and placement for farm experience were identified. It was therefore recommended among others that youth experience programme activities should complement classroom instructions in agriculture. The policies and objectives of school youth experience activities should be related to agricultural science programme among others. These recommendations will serve as a means through which a youth can be self sustained and create more interest in the field of Agriculture.

Keywords: Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme, Implementation, experience programmes, youth, agriculture.

Introduction

Vocational education in agricultural programmes for occupations requires competencies, knowledge and skills in agriculture. Vocational education and training is the development and application of knowledge and skills for occupations needed by society from time to time (Nlebem and Chukwu, 2020). Society is becoming increasingly dependent on those agriculturally oriented businesses necessary for the efficient and effective supply of food and fibre products for the exploding population. Many youths in these

agriculturally oriented businesses need a special type of vocational education in agriculture, as they are to make a maximum contribution to the economic development of the nation.

Agricultural programmes at the secondary and post-secondary levels require knowledge and skills needed by youths to perform successfully and maximally in the practical activities, which almost everyone engages in the process of living (Dossett, et al 2019). Agricultural education aims at making available the efficient manpower required by the industry. Such manpower must be

able to meet the challenges of an ever-changing and increasingly complex world of today, which imposes new and changing workforce requirements. Agricultural education programmes are designed to stimulate and sustain students' interest in agriculture, provide occupational entry-level skills in agriculture to the students, and enable students to acquire basic knowledge, attitude and practical skills required to improve agricultural production techniques. (Famiwole, 2024).

Agricultural education programmes, also include the process of acquiring competencies and skills in general agriculture, animal husbandry, crop production, agricultural processing, forest management, agricultural technology, Agricultural supply and services, public speaking in agriculture, leadership activities, cooperation activities, ridge making, planting operations, thinning operations, staking, mulching, harvesting, supplying, irrigation practice, animal husbandry, feed formulation, egg candling, transplanting, pest and disease control, poultry production, dry season farming, horticulture, orchard management, weed control, pregnancy test in swine, debeaking, vaccination, tractor driving, ploughing, vegetable production, among others.

Ajibare and Fabamise (2018) maintained that the ultimate aim of agricultural education is to produce individuals who would go into real production in the farm or field. Also, a comprehensive programme of agriculture would offer many different types of skills and knowledge in agriculture. Agricultural education in agriculture for farming is to educate present and prospective youths for proficiency in farming. It could also be defined as the type of education that equips the youths

with skills, attitudes, work habits and appreciation essential for the development of practical agricultural experiences (Olaitan, 2010). It is the training aspect of agriculture for producing agricultural personnel through schools. The researcher sees agricultural education as a kind of education that provides youths and adults with sound knowledge of basic principles and techniques of agriculture, which enables them to translate their knowledge into real improvement in agricultural productivity.

This type of agricultural programme provides systematic instruction in agriculture for youth who have entered or who are preparing to enter the work of the farm or the home farm. Agricultural education, according to Famiwole (2024). is regarded as a systematic programme of instruction for public school leavers, out-of-school youths, post-secondary school youths and established farmers organised to improve agricultural methods and rural living. It prepares and develops student abilities to make a beginning and advance in farming and to produce farm products efficiently for the benefit of society.

According Famiwole, et al (2000) and Babasanmi & Owolabi (2018), the following are integral parts of the instruction in agricultural education for farming:

1. Classroom activities
2. Supervised agricultural experience programmes
3. Agricultural mechanics activities
4. School-sponsored organisation

Classroom Activities

Classroom activities provide opportunities for high school students, young farmers and adult farmers to study and discuss problems related to farming

programmes and farm living. Classroom activities in vocational agriculture provide youth with many opportunities for discussing and solving problems related to the supervised agricultural experience programme. Famiwole, et al, (2000) and Famiwole (2015) highlighted the following production areas where activities could be carried out: animal husbandry, forest management, crop production, agricultural processing, forest management, agricultural technology, Agricultural supply and services, public speaking in agriculture, leadership activities, and many others.

Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme (SAEP)

Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme (SAEP) in agriculture consists of all the practical agriculture activities of educational value conducted by students outside class or in school-released time for which systematic instructions and supervision are provided by their teachers, parents, employers (Famiwole et al, 2000 and Akinsorotan & Taiwo, 2016). It makes the instruction in agriculture practical and meaningful to the students and has a great motivational value. This programme provides opportunities for the students to apply the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to farm situations.

Importance of Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme (SAEP)

Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme (SAEP) extends far beyond the classroom. Skills acquired through SAEP's stay with students for a lifetime and positively impact them as they grow. SAEP is essential for the students to succeed in the agricultural educational programmes and is also of benefit to school, employers, communities, parents and teachers

(Adeyeba, 2022 and Afolabi & Famiwole, 2023), as enumerated below:

Benefits to Students

Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme have been observed to be beneficial to students in the following ways:

- Builds self-esteem.
- Application of business practices.
- Focuses on individual skills.
- Encourages citizenship.
- Provides educational opportunities.
- Develops work ethics.
- Teaches responsibility.
- Establishes rapport with employers.

Benefits to the Education System

Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme is observed to be beneficial to the education system.

- ✧ Provides a relationship with community.
- ✧ Encourages academic success.
- ✧ Creates awareness and understanding of technology.
- ✧ Provides relevance to the curriculum.

Benefits to the Agricultural Industry

Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme could be very beneficial to the agricultural industry, as it includes the following:

- ❖ Provides labour.
- ❖ Maintains involvement with the community.
- ❖ Create a pathway from education to career focus.
- ❖ Helps keep students aware of new and relevant instruction.
- ❖ Develops engaged employees.

Sustainability of the Youths in Agriculture

According to Phipps, et al, (2008) and Adeyanju, et al, (2020), youths who

engaged in agricultural education are cognizant of the need for providing education in agriculture, which will give the students opportunities for learning through experience in real-life activities adapted to particular interests and needs. He further explained that for an instruction to be vocational, it must be carried out to the doing stage. The values of Supervised Agricultural Experience Programmes, as highlighted by Phipps, et al, (2008); Dossett, et al (2019) and Banjo, et al, (2023), are:

- Provides an opportunity for the development of the abilities needed for proficiency in agriculture
- Provides an avenue to satisfactory, progressive, requiring knowledge and skills in agriculture
- Provides opportunities to earn, save and use money
- Provides opportunities for contributing to desirable family living.
- Provides a desirable type of motivation and develops students' interest in agriculture
- Develops students' originality, pride of ownership, initiative, self-confidence and managerial ability.
- Provides opportunities for students to plan work, make budgets, use financial agreements, review information, form judgments, evaluate activities, make decisions, solve problems, put plans into action and keep accurate records.
- Provides an opportunity to grow into farming or another occupation requiring knowledge and skills in agriculture
- Provides a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the instruction in agriculture.

Types of Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme (SAEP)

Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme (SAEP) encompasses both experience programmes for youth preparing for farming and experience programmes for youth preparing for off-farm occupations requiring knowledge and skills in agriculture. A supervised agricultural experience programme involves several of the following activities, which students may participate in

- Exploratory experience
- Placement programme
- Entrepreneurship or ownership programme
- Farming programmes

Exploratory Experience:

An important ingredient of Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme (SAEP) for all students studying agriculture, regardless of their career goals, is exploratory experience. An exploratory experience is a study visit with workers in production agriculture, ornamental horticulture, forestry, conservation, and others. The purpose of exploratory experiences is to get a feel for the work involved in the various jobs in agriculture, to understand the working conditions and to get acquainted with the lifestyle of the workers in different jobs. Exploratory experiences are helpful to students in making career decisions, and they have many intangible values in preparing students for any occupation.

Placement Programme

Placement for farm experience refers to locating a student on a farm for experience, where a student will work for employers of their choice. This can either be volunteered time or for earned wages. The most important parts of a placement

are teaching and mentoring the student. It is also intended primarily for:

- i. Student not living on the farm but interested in securing
- ii. Students whose home-farm facilities provide inadequate opportunities for the farming programme

Entrepreneurship or Ownership Programme

An ownership programme in Supervised Agricultural Experience Programme (SAEP) is a profit-oriented programme which involves managerial responsibility in any production activities area they are interested in. This area is specifically for those students who want to establish and run their own business. They gain skills and abilities desirable of an agricultural enterprise or other small business ventures. It involves students learning all sides of business.

Farming programme

Students who are preparing for off-farm agricultural occupation may be engaged in supervised farming programme activities in addition to their part-time employment in the occupation for which they are preparing. A good farming programme includes a series of related activities such as production projects, improvement projects, supplementary farm practices and placement for farm experience (Dyer and Osborne, 2018).

Implementation strategies of Supervised Agricultural Experience Programmes (SAEP)

The following are suggested as paradigms to enlist and sustain students' interest in agriculture through Supervised Agricultural Experience Programmes in schools as opined by Oketoobo and Gideon (2023).

1. All agricultural science students at Junior Secondary School (JSS) and Senior Secondary School (SSS) are to be listed
2. Exploratory activities such as field trips to established farms, agro-based industries would be encouraged to motivate the students and increase their awareness of the different opportunities available in agricultural occupations.
3. Students' interest areas in agricultural crops, livestock, soil, forestry, horticulture job, processing, sales, and services, among others would be determined through the Interest Inventory Data Collection Instrument that could be purchased or developed.
4. Students background in farming or farming-related experience would also be determined and documented to serve as a guide at the counselling or placement stage.
5. Students are placed on an ownership project such as horticultural farms, animal husbandry, pig production, fish production, arable crop production, and poultry management for ownership and managerial experience.
6. Parent interest and concept are sought by teachers and advisers
7. Students are made to establish their project in the school if they are boarders or at home if they are day students.
8. Teachers of agriculture and instruction are made to visit their student project all year round, even during holidays
9. All teachers of agriculture are specially remunerated for supervision of work done, especially during the holidays.

10. Students of the same interest, e.g product production, goat farming, etc, meet at least every fortnight to discuss their challenges on their ownership projects
11. A specialist is invited by the supervisor, teacher to give professional talks of the students n the challenges on their different projects
12. Students' challenges are discussed during their in-school Youth Organization meeting, youth organization clubs are established based on student programs such as; vegetable clubs, Arable crops club, Goat clubs, Sales club, Landscapers, piggery club.
13. Students attend local, zonal, State and national exhibitions, conventions and award nights to showcase their products and compete with their students
14. Awards are given at every level to motivate high-performance students

Production projects on the farm

- (i) Supplementary farm practices
- (ii) Crop production
- (iii) Livestock production
- (iv) Improvement projects

Production Project: A production project is a business venture for experience and profit involving the production of a crop or some type of livestock. Production project is owned in full or in part by and managed by the student. If the student owns the project in full, he receives the net income after all expenses are paid. Production projects are a fundamental part of a student's school work, supervised by the instructor and parents and carried to completion by the student. They involve careful study,

planning, recording, execution, summarization and evaluation.

Improvement Projects: An improvement project is an undertaking involving of related activities which usually cover a relatively long period. It is designed to improve (1) the efficiency of a farm enterprise, either crop or livestock (2) the whole farm business (3) the appearance or real estate value of the farm (4) the comfort and convenience of the farm family. Ownership remains with the family, and an improvement project usually provides no direct income to a student. An improvement project often results in more income to the farm family, which makes it possible for the parents to give the student more financial assistance than other wise be possible. Often the opportunities which improvement projects provide sfor contributing to the welfare of the family are a major reasons for interests in these projects some examples of improvement projects are swine herd, home ground, home improvements, home shop, keeping account and others.

Supplementary farm Practice: A supplementary farm practice is a job undertaken for experience or for the development of a skill and it is in addition to the practices included a student's production or improvement projects. It consists of a single job such as culling hens, feeding a nuanced ration, caponizing, treating seed, inoculating seed, testing of soil etc. Jobs of this type provide for the development of ability to carry out numerous specific approved practices which would not other otherwise be included in a student's supervised occupational experience programme; consequently a student should be encouraged to put into effect a large number of desirable supplementary

farm practices, which ordinarily require only a short time to complete (Ajayi, 2015). Supplementary projects provide

- The experiences an individual needs
- Experience not already required
- Experiences which require systematic instruction and participation
- Experiences that will be frequently used
- Experiences that are not included in the production or improvement projects
- Experiences with approved practices as a result of the instruction in agriculture.

Selection of activities for Supervised Agriculture Experience Programme

The following instructional procedures are suggested after the students have survived their situations and have developed an understanding of supervised agricultural experience programmes:

- Have students talk with their parents regarding the activities that will be most desirable for them
- Have students list the placement for experience jobs and production projects it will be possible for them to have
- Divide the students into groups having the same placement for experience jobs or production projects
- Have each students evaluate the previous discussions and make a final selection of disenable experience
- Have each student prepare a list of improvement project planed.
- Discuss with students the possibilities for group projects and list any which are needed to provide

experiences for certain class members who do not have an opportunity for such experiences at home or on a job

- Have each students prepare a list of the agricultural mechanics activities to include in the programme
- Have each individual decided on any equipment needed in connection with the programme
- Have students preparing for off-farm occupations requiring knowledge and skills in agriculture plan appropriate participatory experience.

School-sponsored organisations such as Future Farmers of Nigeria (FFN). It is an important part of vocational agriculture. It is an organization of students in vocational agriculture. It is an educational organization; membership includes all agricultural students to develop agricultural leadership, character, thrift, scholarship, cooperation, citizenship and patriotism. The specific purposes for which this organization was formed are

- (i) To develop competent, aggressive agricultural leadership
- (ii) To create and nurture a love of agriculture
- (iii) To strengthen the confidence of young people in themselves and their work
- (iv) To create more interest in the intelligence choice of agricultural occupation
- (v) To encourage members in the development of occupational experience programmes and in the establishment of agricultural careers
- (vi) To encourage members to improve the home and its surrounding
- (vii) To encourage participation in worthy undertakings for the improvement of agriculture

(viii) To encourage and practice thrift

Motto of the School-sponsored organization

The following motto reflects the true vocational educational spirit and sincerity of purpose of the organization

‘Learning to do, Doing to Learn, and Earn, Earning to live, Living to serve’.

The organization provides opportunities for youth to do what they like to do. Youth enjoy doing something worth while, excelling in their work and play, being appreciated, in responsible positions, learning how to help themselves, having opportunities to participate in activities, and obtaining recognition through outstanding service and achievement. Membership in a youth organization develops: Youth socially, responsibilities citizenship, ability of expression, character, abilities to work with others, vocational accomplishment, dignified work and teacher thrift etc.

Developing a programme of activities

An organization programme of activities consists of an outline of activities, covering approximately a year based on the interests, needs and desires of the members and the organizational as a whole, which usually results in a very worthy list of accomplishments. A comprehensive programme stimulates the interest, provides many opportunities for worthwhile experiences, helps to develop an effective educational programme for agricultural purposes and develops community interest and understanding.

The major divisions usually included in a programme of activities are:

- Supervised occupational experiences in agriculture
- Cooperation

- Community service
- Leadership
- Earning and saving
- Conduct of meetings
- Scholarship
- Recreation
- Organizational publicity and information
- Participation in state and national activities (Famiwole et al. 2000; Akinsorotan and Taiwo, 2016).

Implementing youth programme in agriculture

If the implementation process is to be a success, it must be properly planned and organized. Careful planning and execution of a balanced programme of activities required a great deal of effort. According to Oyeleye, et al (2021) and Oludipe (2023) efforts should be made by the chapter of the organization to:

- Provide a copy of the programme of activities to the members
- Ensure that every member serves on a committee
- Have each committee coordinate its activities
- Ensure that the chairman of the programme of activity meet with execute committee to prepare monthly activity
- Review the programme of activity periodically
- Report the progress of activities and problems encountered towards the fulfillment of activity objectives.

Conclusion

Supervised experience programme is an effective and meaningful way for the students of agriculture to develop essential skills and knowledge. Youth organization programme motivates students through activities that will stimulate their interest and explore job opportunities for

students outside the school. The importance of viable youth experience programmes cannot be overemphasised in times like this, when the country is reshaping its agricultural development and improvement programmes.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion in this paper, the following recommendations have been made:

- Supervised experience programme activities should complement classroom instructions in agriculture;
- The policies and objectives of the youth programme should be related to agricultural science programmes;
- Youth organization programmes should tend towards developing genuine interest in students and saleable skills in agriculture through learning by doing and experiential activities in agriculture;
- Every student of agriculture should be provided opportunity for exploratory activities, improvement projects, placement activities and supplementary programme.

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