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FARMING AS A SUSTAINABLE VOCATION FOR SELF-RELIANCE AND EMPLOYABILITY OF ADULTS

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Abstract
The paper discussed farming as a sustainable vocation for self-reliance and employability of adults, considering the current economic environment emphasizing the need for sustainable vocational choices to overcome the challenges of economic down turn where wages cannot sustain the inflation rate of the prices of goods and services. Basically, the purpose of the paper is to create more awareness on the need for adopting cultural practices in farming and to re-awaken the consciousness of seeing farming as an attractive, profit making business not as a mere hobby for adults. Literatures reviewed from textbooks and journals identified cultural practice as a way of sustaining soil fertility and increasing productivity. The rise of crime, hunger and theft in the society are attributable to poor attitude to farming profession as a result of get rich quick syndrome and poor attitude to farming also leads to low productivity of farm products and low productivity of farm products. The paper discussed the concept of farming; sustainable vocation and farming, self-reliance and farming; farming as the panacea for the employability of adultery and Vocational Adult Education Programme. The paper concludes that farming remains a sustainable vocation that the paper does not aim to turn every subsistence farmer into commercial farmer it should inspire farmers to think and make the right choices for profit it is recommended that the government should organize sensitization conferences, seminars and workshops to educate communities on the basic cultural practice in order to make farming more attractive through establishing functional farm settlement schemes and distributing improved farm inputs to farmers among others. The accomplishment of the recommendation will not only increase food production but will also attract youths for employability, sustainability and be self-reliant in farming profession.
Key words: Farming, sustainable vocation, self-reliance, employability of adults, vocational adult education.

Introduction

In this period of economic challenges, employment problems after graduation for white collar jobs, underemployment and misemployment, the pursuit for sustainable vocations remains the alternative to self-reliance and enhanced employability for adults. Most profession can be described to be unsustainable considering the advent of technology in relation to the need in labour market. According to A.A. Adindu (personal communication, November 27, 1991). on sustainable vocation for the young generations posited that there are three major professions that will continue to survive in the era of time. First, is the profession of agriculture because people must eat and engaging in agriculture will be a sustainable venture, second is the profession of education, because people must learn and that new knowledge will always be part of human priority for development and the third is health related profession. The scholar summarized by stating that with good and balanced food people would rarely need much of health services. Adindu, also posited that although education is a necessity, a hungry man does not go to school but proceeds from agriculture can fund education. This paper therefore discussed the potentials in farming as a sustainable vocation, focusing on its capacity to foster economic independence and create employment opportunities. Farming is a traditionally subsistence activity from time and has been practiced from creation. In the Bible, in the story of Jacob and the in-law where Jacob used special agricultural breeding skills to acquire large animals from the in-law illustrates the use of breeding cultural practice in farming (Good News Bible, 2005) Genesis 30:37-43.

More so, pre-history will always describe a wealthy man in line with the number of farm animals, bans of yam and stock of grains owned, it is not far-fetched to claim that other profession could have emanated from the farming profession. The paper explores the potentials of farming as a sustainable vocation to foster economic independence and create employment opportunities and

self-reliance. Most courses and profession are being displaced due to technology yet farming still remains a sustainable vocation. God Almighty remains the first agriculturist that established a garden for man and gave them charge of the Garden of Eden, the poor cultural practice of allowing another entity to harvest wrong fruit in their garden led to their fall (Genesis 2: 5-6).

The issue is that most people who engage in farming neither see it as business, they simply engage in it without applying proper skill nor keep proper records of gains, thus, the need to re-emphasis on the cultural practices which if properly practiced is tantamount to a bumper harvest and financial independence. This is when the farmer no longer borrows to feed but can sell the proceeds to solve emergency problems, thereby presenting farming as a sustainable vocation, a self-reliant activity that provides employment for members of the society.

Farming

Basically, farming can be defined as the act or practice of tilling the soil, planting seeds and growing edible plants, it also includes rearing of animals for meat or milk (Longman Dictionary, 2009).

However, farming cannot be discussed without mentioning the term agriculture for clarity and fine tuning some misconceptions, hence the definition of agriculture. The Longman Dictionary (2009) defined agriculture as the science of farming; it is a science because it applies scientific principles and knowledge in the production of crops and animals. In applying scientific principles, it is objective, in decision, it can be replicated; the result can be tested and generalized, the results can also be relied on for improvement (National Academies Press, 2024). The back drop is engaging in farming without applying the science. It is the interest of this paper to encourage the application of science which is the skills of cultural practices in farming which makes a lot difference and

helps in sustainable vocation, and therefore conceives farming as the production of plants and animals for vocation and sustenance. Growing crops without applying the necessary cultural practice will result to a wasteful venture, loss of resources, time and frustration due to poor yield. The inability to see farming as a business makes some practitioners not to apply the science skills of cultural practices, unfortunately neglect of agriculture as bases of sustenance have led to get rich quick practices like kidnapping and hacking of bank accounts. There is no doubt that any farmer that engages in yearly farming and still buys major food stuffs in the market is not a progressive farmer. The transformational science skills employed by practicing farmers distinguish and make farming a sustainable, self-reliance and employable venture. These skills are basic cultural practices which most subsistence farmers neglect, it also enables them decide; what to produce, how much to produce, what method to use, how and where to dispose outputs, how and where to obtain inputs.

More so, embarking on generally (staple) planting crops is usually not profitable because where there is surplus of a particular crop during the season, the prices fall and there are little or no storage facilities in our communities and government sectors. The basic skills needed for farming which could be acquired by reading books, closeness to an extension worker attending workshops and seminars include;

i. Site selection: The site and soil to be selected for farming depends on the type of crop to be planted. Most farmers who plant to keep themselves busy, plant in any space of land without considering if the soil is suitable for the crop. However, planting crops in a wrong type of soil results to poor yield or none at all. Consultation with extension agents is necessary to ensure good soil and climate requirement. That unskilled farmers

have been planting in the same soil is not the issue but how profitable is the farming activity.

ii. Field measurement and land preparation: This is necessary to guide the farmer to know the actual area of the farm, helps in spacing the crops and measure productivity because engaging in a large space of land with poor output (harvest) is a waste of resources and time. In land preparation, land should be cleared, ploughed, harrowed and ridged depending on the type of crop to be planted. If manual land preparation is to be adopted by the use of hoe, the heaps and mounds should match the type of crop because land preparation for groundnut should be different from the land preparation for yam. Furthermore, if hired labour is used it should be properly supervised to avoid making heaps on hard untilled elevated land, also where the land is sloppy cross-bars should be erected to prevent erosion (Orikpe, 2009)

iii. Choice of crop and planting materials: The choice of crop for planting should always be the one you know how to cultivate that will yield highly to break even and have extra for emergency, shortcoming or sale. This is because farming is a business that should be geared towards making profit. In applying Adam Smith theory of comparative advantage (Investopedia, 2024) in this context, it is necessary a farmer considers producing sufficient crops that are produced at the lowest price. It is also important that the farmer determine the level of output that leads to maximum profit. Therefore, applying simple rule of comparative advantage helps the farmer to produce crops at a low cost due to environment gives more profit. If a farmer has a little plot of 50 x 50 square metres of land having a plantain plantation will not give the best benefit for survival in a year, dividing the plot into portions and planting different crops solely

and planting plantain round the edges would give a better utilization of the land. In the same vein, where there are enough land engaging in cash crops like pepper, sesame seed, ginger, cowpea etc. would give a better financial reward. On planting materials, seeds to be planted should be selected and tested to ensure they are viable, while seeds with holes should be removed, the selected can also be treated with the right chemicals before planting.

iv. Planting Dates: The time and month of planting is very important because planting at a wrong time will give poor harvest. For instance, transplanting tomato sapling under a sun will affect its survival. More so, crops require varied level of sunshine's humidity or rainfall for optimum performance.

v. Sowing: Most farmers do not follow the required spacing and number of seeds per hole. It is not unusual to see 3 to 4 stand of maize sapling in a hole, which results to competition for air, water, space and soil nutrients leading to poor yield. Maize plant requires sowing at 2cm to 4cm deep in a moist soil, one seed per hole at a spacing of 25cm within row and 75cm between row apart and for sesame 2cm to 4cm deep 30cm within row and 60cm between row in a moist soil mixing one part of the soil with 3 parts of sandy soil to drop a pinch in a hole and later thinning to 2 to 3 sapling stands depending on the variety for maximum yield (Adindu, 2017).

vi. Weeding**:** This is necessary and should be timely, weeding at most 3 weeks after planting for proper aeration and 3 times for crop growth and development. Weeds retard the growth of the crops and reduces the yield because they compete with the air, space, nutrient and water with the plant. Weeding should be done before flowering tussling like in cowpea, sesame plant and Groundnut to avoid abortion and poor yield.

vii. Manuring and fertilization: For clarification of terms; firstly, manure is anything that can be added to the soil to increase the yield of crops; Manuring is the application of organic manure to the soil while fertilization is the application of inorganic manure. (Orikpe, 2009) Generally, crops require rich soil at different levels for proper growth and yield. The growths retard when crops germinate without enough rich soil to sustain the growth, therefore it is recommended to incorporate the organic manure like poultry droppings, animal dungs or compost manure during land preparation. On the other hand, split application of fertilizers can be applied during planting for enhanced growth depending on the technical know-how and the requirement of the crop. More so, some farmers make the mistake of placing the fertilizers so close to the sapling in a low moistened soil thereby shriveling the leaves of the plant. Additionally, some farmers add the wrong type of fertilizer and at a wrong quantity. The unused inorganic fertilizer forms hard pan and destroys the soil quality (Adelekan and Taiwo, 2008)

viii. Harvesting: Depending on what the farmer intends to use the produce for, it is good to harvest when the crop is matured enough and early too, to prevent pests.

ix. Crop rotation: Due to scarcity of land for farming and the utilization of land for industries and other purposes, crop rotation becomes imperative instead of planting same type of crop in same portion of land yearly, it is necessary as a farming practice to rotate the crops being planted in a piece of land. This according to Nwike, (2017) crop rotation practice reduces the damaging population of pests and disease by changing to a non-susceptible crop. Nonetheless, it also helps to replenish, improve, kill and subdue weeds especially when cereal or root crops are replaced with legumes in the farmland

Sustainable Vocation and Farming

Firstly, sustainability according to Santander Open Academy (2022) has to do with achieving living and working conditions that support people in engaging and remaining in work throughout an extended working period, thus meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of young generations to meet their own needs.

Sustainable vocational farming therefore can be described as a career aligned with the individual's interest, strength and values and offers ongoing learning and renewal, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture which empowers people to make a living.

Farming fits in as a sustainable vocation considering the age long practice as it provides basic need that is food, and as far as people live, they must eat.

Furthermore, according to Elom and Nwajiuba, (2017) 193, Odenyi, Udensi and Ogar (2020) countries of world and global civil societies met in 2015 and adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) with 17 sustainable development goals with 169 targets, known as transforming the world. In the 17 goals, goals 2, 5, 8, 12, 13,14 are related activity farming can provide which has to do with ending hunger.

Self-reliance and Farming

Self-reliance is the ability to do things and make decisions by oneself without meeting other people for help. This is trusting in one's own efforts and ability to achieve results. It can also be described as ability to do or decide things by oneself without depending on the help or advice of other people, self-reliance also implies becoming an independent self-reliant adult where the farmer depends on the output of the farm to solve problems and free from indebtedness.

The yearly turn-out of graduates in our tertiary institutions is not matching the vacancies in the labour market both in number and technical skills thereby leaving a lot of graduates unemployed attributable to lack of saleable skills, coupled with this is the upgrade in technical facilities in agencies to perform some human activities. Farming as a vocation therefore, becomes handy and has continued to be a self-reliant vocation, especially when basic cultural agricultural skills are applied. The society will always need food, fish, chicken, honey, and snail to survive, therefore, venturing into skills that will boost the production of the above will continue to keep farming relevant and a solution to job search as it entails production of basic needs to the society.

The courses some of our graduates study are not practicable on their own without attaching themselves to government or private organizations as such making choices of courses that involve practical skills like farming that defines the individual creative ability is a better option. On the other hand, having a small plot of activity land cannot prevent interested farmer from engaging in agricultural activity, bad governance or policy does not affect it because irrespective of harsh policies crops will still grow. Farming therefore bridges this gap as everyone can participate and be self-reliant if it is done diligently.

Farming as the Panacea for the Employability of Adults

Employability is a set of achievement skills, understanding and personal attributes that makes students more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations which benefits them, the work force, the community and the economy (University of Plymouth (2024). It can also be viewed as those qualities of being suitable for paid work. Employability can also be viewed as the relative capacity of an individual to achieve meaningful employment given the interaction of personal circumstances and the labour market. It can also be simple put as those qualities that make an individual be sort for in the labour market. It is regarded as person's

qualifications, abilities, experiences and soft skills put together as a measure of one's suitability for available employment and further career development. Factors that contribute to employability include; Soft skills; problem solving skills, knowledge skills and academic reputation. On the other hand, the employability skills are; Good communication, reliability, problem solving, organization and planning, initiative, self-management, leadership quality, learning and technical skills (University of Sydney, 2024).

Vocational Adult Education Programme

Vocational adult education programme is a process of developing adult individuals for social economic and occupational competency; a process of preparing adults for entrance into the world of work. Farming for sustainability will educate adults on sustainable ways of farming exploratory, transforming and utilizing environmental resources without destroying the ecosystem or causing environmental degradation (Mbalisi and Nwoye, 2016).

According to Chieke and Okunna (2022), training programmes in traditional adult education included agricultural education which includes; farming, fishing and veterinary science. Therefore, farming as a vocation for adults is an age long vocation which has survived many industrial revolutions, very important in the traditional education system and essential in the development of human civilization. The curriculum under agriculture included teaching cultivation of different types of crops. The apprentice farmer therefore works with the master who may be the father or relation imitating the master. This old and surviving vocation need to be revived from time to time for better productivity and profit.

Additionally, not having large sparse of land cannot prevent interested farmer from engaging in agricultural activities because some crops, can be planted using irrigation, planting of

crops in bags for a managed water application like cucumber and yam. by mixing sand with poultry droppings or other types of organic manure and filling into bags. This way farmers can harvest yam twice in a year, a period of 6 month's gap, the turn-out of farming returns of this nature and adopting the recommendations of this paper will make farming an attractive vocation for increasing employability in the society.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that farming, irrespective of how long it has been practiced remains a sustainable vocation through ages, it is a natural profession that does not require much stress to learn, flexible and informal in learning and practice. The paper posits that change required about farming is changing the way people think about it, in order to make it profitable as well as in the area of the application of modern basic skills to improve production. Farming has the potentials of unlocking sustainable development goals; 2,5,8,12,13,14 and 15 for better living and is capable of liberating the unemployed, matured individuals from financial burdens, thus being a part of vocational adult education programme which is a vocation for survival that is practiced in our different homes.

Recommendations

1. The government through agricultural extension agents should organize sensitization seminars to educate communities on the basic skills contained in cultural practice.
2. The government should revive or establish farm settlement schemes with better functional policies as was during the regional government in Nigeria.
3. The government should utilize river banks in different communities for irrigation to encourage farmers to engage in irrigation farming.

4. Every government institution should have a farm or plantation as a source of internally generated revenue.
5. The government should provide improved seeds and inputs to interested graduates venturing into farming.
6. Government should establish storage and processing facilities to cater for surplus harvest.
7. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)members should be trained on farming skills during their orientation
8. The government should be organizing grass root seminars for attitudinal change in modern farming cultural practice, record keeping for improved productivity.

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