

Capacity Building and Utilization of Agriculture for Poverty Eradication: Diversifying Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria

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Abstract: The objective of this paper is to emphasize the need and importance of utilizing Agriculture as a variable for capacity building and its effect when reflected as a necessity in entrepreneurship education to serve as a panacea to some social economic problems of unemployment and poverty.. The methodology here involved review of the importance of capacity building in agricultural project implementation and major constraints to capacity building in agriculture as important entrepreneurship element. It went further to overview the growth in aquatic potential of Lagos State and stressed the achievements of Lagos State Government Agriculture Programmes with an update of the Achievements of National Programme for food security. The uniqueness of the paper is providing Capacity building through Practical Agricultural Education as a framework of what and how viable entrepreneurship skill should be rather than what it is. It recommended among others that Political will on the part of government has to change by reducing interest rate and increasing budgetary allocation to agriculture with adequate provision of modern farm implements to enhance the nation's capacity and interest in agriculture. And the formation of synergy among entrepreneurship development, agriculture and higher education curriculum since none of this variable can function viably in isolation to eradicate poverty.

Key Words: Agriculture, Capacity building, Poverty eradication, Entrepreneurship Education.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The increasing rate of poverty, unemployment, corruption and so many other socio-economic problems become worrisome to the government and to every well meaning citizen in Nigeria. Therefore, the need apparent change is very desirable and necessary for the country to move and forge ahead so as to meet up with the global challenges. The incidence of Poverty in Nigeria is on the high side, where 70% of the total population has been classified as poor (Nigeria entrepreneurship initiative, 2009; Ewhrudjakpor, 2008). This rate of poverty is however accentuated by the increasing rate of unemployment, high level of illiteracy, corruption and bad governance among others. Therefore, as a panacea to this problem, entrepreneurship has been identified as a means of providing employment and income generation in the country. Several attempt have been made through researches, mounting of entrepreneurship courses and programmes in both institutions of learning and entrepreneurship research centers for the purpose of developing both entrepreneurship spirit and culture (Akpomi 2009; Adejimola and Olufunmilayo 2009; Dickson, Solomon and Weaver, 2008, Vincent and Farlow, 2008; Urbano, Aponte and Toledano,2008;Poikkijoki and Heinonen, 2006;Fuchs,Werner and Wallau,2008;Johnso,Craig and Hildebrand,2006;Matlay,2008 and 2009;Solomon, 2007). In this regard effort has to be intensified to mobilize and enhance entrepreneurial activity which will consequently benefit individuals, government, and the society at large.

Despite the foregoing, unemployment rate and poverty level of Nigerians rather than reducing is still on the high side. This is evidenced from the report of Adejimola and Olufunmilayo (2009) that about 80% of the graduates find it difficult to get employment every year. The neglect of the utilization of agriculture and agro-based initiative as a capacity building variable has become a noticeable reason for this situation. The move toward poverty eradication should not be considered and treated in isolation, different approaches and strategies need to be employed. Entrepreneurship education as a capacity building component should not be limited to manufacturing, industrial and technical initiative only as obtainable at present but should practically include Agriculture and agro-allied ideas. Universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, and the society at large stand to benefit a lot from the romance of Agriculture as germane element of capacity building or even

foundation upon which entrepreneurship education should be built due to growing role and effort of the government and development agencies to promote agriculture. According to United Nations Development Programme (2011), capacity building in Agriculture has risen high on the African countries development agenda. The World Bank, with other international donors is seeking appropriate means to work with African Governments to enhance their capacity to implement development programmes throughout the continent. Given the rural nature of most African economies and the concentration of the poor in rural areas, there is a pressing need to increase capacity to promote agricultural development in Nigeria and Lagos State in particular so as ameliorate unemployment rate and consequently eradicate poverty.

Importance of Capacity Building in Agricultural Project Implementation

Capacity building is a lengthy process, particularly where initial capacity is very weak. Improvement may require commitment beyond the customary time limits. Where an initial project is justified, there is a need for programme continuity, so that early gains are not eroded by shifting priorities. The human components of capacity-building activities are inherently unpredictable, which gives rise to the need for careful supervision, combined with the flexibility to adjust in accordance with the insights gained during project implementation (Deborah, 2003). The essence of capacity building is sustainability - the creation of institutions and practices that continue to perform after a project is completed. According to Edward (1999), many of the barriers to sustainability have the same root cause:

- i. The inadequacy of local resources to support project activities after donor fund has been drawn down.
- ii. Special incentives to project staff, explicit or implicit, are discontinued, even where resources are allocated from the government budget to fund staff.
- iii. Money is not available to complete unfinished capital works or to provide appropriate funding for the non-staff, recurrent items that had been carried by the project budget.

Failure to budget enough funds to sustain a project after completion can be taken to mean that the government accords less priority to the project than expected when the project was appraised (it should not have been implemented) or that project design was not based on a realistic appreciation of the scarcity of budgetary resources (it should have been designed to operate at lower cost).

Food as a Basic Necessity and Its Production for National Strength and Security

Omonona, and Agoi (2007), noted that Food is a basic necessity of life. Its importance is seen from the fact that it is a basic means of sustenance and adequate food intake, in terms of quantity and quality, is a key for healthy and productive life. The importance of food is also revealed in the fact that it accounts for a substantial part of a typical Nigerian household budget. Variety of available food serves as important "vehicles" for taking nutrients into the body and bringing about human pleasure, hence, the need for food to be taken in the right quantity and quality. To measure the quality of any food taken, there are classes of essential nutrients, which must be combined, in appropriate proportion to ensure a balanced food intake. These include carbohydrates, protein, fats and oil, vitamins and minerals. The all time low average level of 7.7g animal protein intake per day of an average Nigerian (Aromolaran and Bamgbose 1999) simply exemplifies a recurring shortcoming in the African Food Consumption Culture. Adeshinwa, Aribido and Obiniyi (2003) noted that today, the increasing human population in the face of inelastic production strategies appears to have widened the demand-supply gap and accentuates scarcity of food, particularly meat products. Olayemi (1996) observed that the economic development of a nation is dependent on its factor endowment. This includes the non-human and human resources. The productive capacity of the human resources is however a function of how well fed they are. Developing countries like Nigeria are face with the quality and quantity of food. According to Eade (2007), the concern for food security and nutritional well being in an economy is predicated by role of human element in economic development. This shows why food is of economic, social and political significant with regard to national strength and security.

The dimensions of food security make it clear that the concept of food problem is a complex one with many dimensions. At one level the concern is with national food security, which is the ability of countries to produce or import sufficient food in all year to meet their requirement for both private and public distribution. At another level the concern is more with the problem of malnutrition. FAO/WHO (1993) stated that food security may be defined as access by all people at all times to sufficient food for a healthy and productive life. This definitional framework implies that four major elements constitute food security. These are availability, adequacy, accessibility and sustainability of access. Availability connotes the physical presence of food in large amounts, accessibility suggests being able to get food at the needed time (entitlement) while sustainability denote regularity in availability, adequacy and accessibility at all time i.e equilibrium between demand and supply of food . Transitory food insecurity occurs when there is a temporary decline in access to adequate food because of instability in food production, food price increases or income shortfalls. We may distinguish between

national food security and household food security. This distinction is necessary because an aggregate supply of food, from domestic sources or import or both, are prerequisite but certainly not a sufficient condition for a food secure situation in a country. In other words, adequate availability of food in Nigeria on a per capita basis does not necessarily translate to sufficient and adequate food for every citizen.

Food security at household level is a subset of the national level and it requires that all individuals and households have access to sufficient food either by producing it themselves or by generating sufficient income to demand for it. Food availability is a function of the combination of domestic food stocks, commercial food imports, food aid, and domestic food production, as well as the underlying determinants each of these factors.

Update of the Achievements of National Programme for Food Security In Nigeria.

The federal government of Nigeria engaged in various capacity building programmes that recorded some reasonable achievements of the programme

Objectives for food security are:

- To improve household food security and incomes through increase in productivity, diversification and sustainable use of national resources.
- To enhance food security of consumers through improved availability of and access to a variety of foods and also increase incomes through more efficient marketing.
- To enhance farmers and consumers access to support services such as extension, credit, nutrition and health education.
- To foster participation of the poorer section of the rural population including women, youth and other vulnerable groups in the development of the community.
- To provide required services to farmers, fishermen and other stakeholders with a view to enhancing sustained productivity to meet reasonable level of Food Security; and to encourage the populace to imbibe the culture and principles of cooperatives.

Major Constraints to Capacity Building in Agriculture as Important Entrepreneurship Element

The following provides a discussion on the major constraints found in the agriculture (rural) sector, suggestions as to probable causes of the problems and finally, recommendations for a long-term capacity building programme involving technical and academic interventions. Areas where constraints can be addressed are found in both the private sector and public sector as follows:

1. Vocational/Technical Areas Important to Farming and Agribusiness

The agriculture sector as a whole is characterized by lack of basic skills in areas important to farming: machinery maintenance, motor mechanics, metal work, and basic electronics. It is the lack of 'technical know-how' in the Lagos farmer that prevents his ability to grow and improve.

2. Lack of Trained Technical Extension Specialists Serving Rural Populations

The extension system is small, the majority of them have a low technical education level. The government recognizes the many constraints to an effective service and, as a partial solution, has begun to outsource extension services to some NGOs in rural areas. Nevertheless, extension remains an area where capacity building activities especially through short-term knowledge building and methods courses, could make a significant difference.

3. Lack of Basic Business and Management Skills Across the Workforce

A common refrain echoed by business leaders and donors alike was the need for the more basic business skills at all levels. Emphasis is on the need for extensive and basic business skills from the technical, i.e., 'grower level' to the small and mid-enterprise level. "Businesses need employees who know how to do things" from manual work to decision-making. Basic numeracy and literacy, simple book-keeping, carpentry and mechanics as well as orientation to running a business were all cited as needed to improve private sector performance. Very clearly stated was the absence of practical workplace skills among recently graduated employees, even those from the technical agricultural schools. Related to the constraints on business from an unskilled workforce was the lack of confidence and trust that employers place in their workers.

4. Limited access to credit for small enterprises in rural areas

Credit is acknowledged to be in short supply and costly. With no special provisions for rural or agricultural endeavors. Overall, the process of strengthening access to credit through rural institutions is a larger issue than capacity development alone.

5. Limited number of university trained staff capable of structuring and carrying out research in specific relevant areas

A frequently expressed concern related to agricultural research is the insufficient number of scientists who can formulate and carry out agricultural research relevant to Nigerian needs. Very few have graduate level training adequate to formulate and supervise research studies to make Agriculture more interesting.

6. Shallow philosophy of Agriculture as a Germane Entrepreneurial Element

The philosophy of stakeholders in entrepreneurship education has not been brilliantly focused on Agriculture; the passive reflection is just a lips service with no continual and sustained follow up. One reason for this has been informed from the perspective that the system of agriculture still practice in Nigeria is still semi-crude and very tedious rather than modern and convenience.

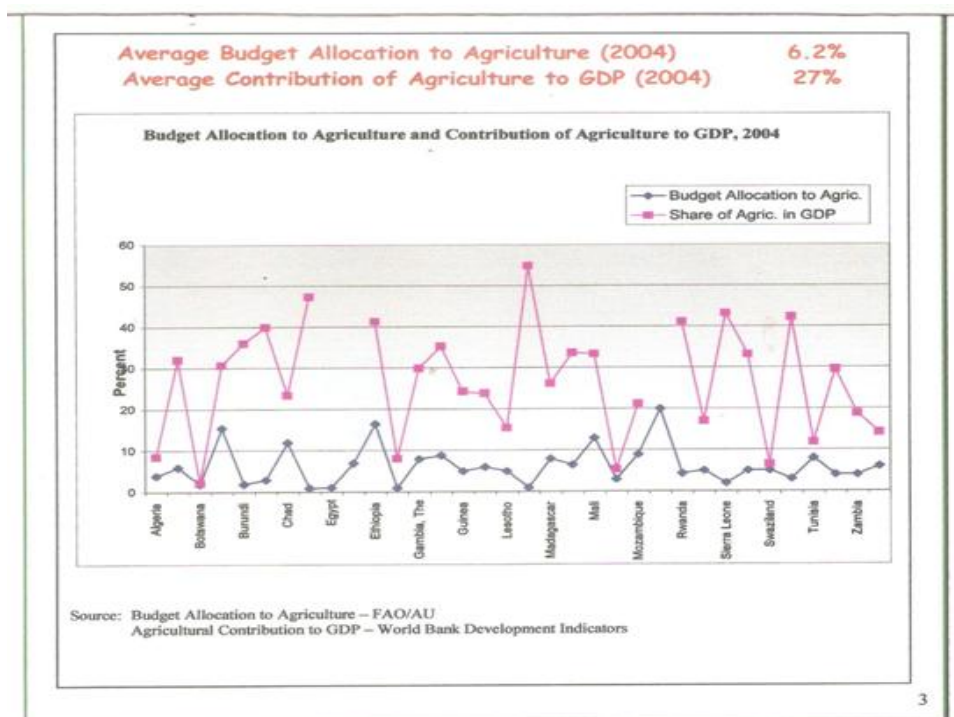
Agro-Aquatic Potential of Nigeria and Other Sub Sahara Africans.

Though Lagos State is endowed with expanses of water and large dams, lakes and streams, the aquaculture potential of the state is seriously under-utilized because of the inability of local fish farmers to employ modern techniques to boost their production and income.

Oluwakemi (2010) noted that one of the cardinal programmes of Governor Babatunde Raji Fashola is food security through the optimal utilization of the aquatic resources of the state for fish production. To corroborate this, the Lagos State Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives have introduced cages and pens fish farming techniques at the lagoon in front of the University of Lagos (UNILAG), and in the open water bodies at Idale Whedakoh, Badagry Local Government Area; Oto/Awori, Ojo Local Government Area; Ise, Ibeju-Lekki Local Government Area; Oko-Orisan, Epe Local Government area; Ijede, Ikorodu Local Government Area; Badore, Eti-Osa Local Government area and at Gbaji-Yeke in Badagry West Local Council Development Area of the state. This will enable millions of unemployed Nigerians and Lagosians in particular and most especially youths take advantage of this system to generate employment, stimulate economic growth and boost local food production. Fish farming in cages and pens allows farmers to enjoy low labour and reduction in operational cost profile, with higher yield potential than stagnant ponds. The national fish demand is about 1.85 million tonnes while the local production is only 0.51 million tonnes, based on a population figure of 140 million people. Nigeria currently imports 0.7 million tonnes of frozen fish annually making it the highest importer of frozen fish in the world with annual foreign exchange drain of N35.0 billion. The challenge therefore is to bridge the wide gap between fish demand and supply. Aquaculture alone has the potential to supply the fish national requirement if properly harnessed.

The global revenue from fishing fleets is over \$15 billion yearly. Fishing provides millions of Nigerian families with sources of protein. Fish farming is contributing to poverty alleviation. Aquaculture alone has the potential to supply the national fish requirement if properly harnessed. There must therefore, be concerted efforts to explore the potentials of aquaculture for the purpose of Food Security Programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria. Based on the success of the pilot scheme and in furtherance of the Marine Agriculture initiative of the then Fashola administration in Lagos State, the government has embarked on the popularization of the cage and pen culture systems in the open water bodies of Lagos State.

Fig 1: Comparison of Budget Allocation to Agriculture and Contribution of Agriculture to Gross Domestic Product in 2004



One can see from figure 1 that on average, the contribution of agriculture to GDP far exceeds the share of government budget allocated to the agriculture sector. The average budget allocation to agriculture for the 34 countries in 2004 was 6.2 percent whereas the average contribution of agriculture to the GDP for the 34 countries in 2004 was 27 percent. These figures show a great disparity between allocation to a sector that contributes so much to the national GDP. This reconfirms the findings from various reports indicating that developed countries spend more than 20 percent on agricultural development while developing countries spend less than 10 percent. This is despite the fact that Agriculture is the largest sector in many developing countries in terms of its share in GDP, employment and exports. More importantly, most of the world's poor live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Therefore, agricultural expenditure is one of the most important government instruments for promoting economic growth and alleviating poverty in rural areas and countries.

Achievements of Lagos State Government's and the Sub Saharan African's Agriculture Programmes

The various agriculture capacity building programmes embarked upon by Lagos State Government recorded some achievements listed below:

- 2,826 people trained for fish farming
- 2,715 people trained to grow crops
- 1,411 people trained to grow livestock
- Increased Local Food Crop Production from 1.452m metric tons (2007) to 2.103m metric tons (2010)
- Increased Livestock from 1.765m metric tons (2007) to - 2.005m metric tons (2010)
- Increased aggregate Fisheries Production from 0.249m metric tons (2007) to 0.255m metric tons (2010)
- 1,500 Youths Benefited from Agricultural Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) Project from 300 Youths (2007) up to 1,500 (2010)
- 45% Increase in Local Food Crop Production; 14% Increase in Livestock Production; 1% Increase in Fish Production
- 2,065 Employment Generations (Youths/Rice Farmers)
- Procurement of Tractors and Implements to reduce farmers drudgery and rejuvenated the tractor hiring scheme.

II. CONCLUSION

Capacity building and utilization of Agriculture involves all variables that promote or enhance the agricultural sub-sector, creates a viable context for entrepreneurship development, reduces unemployment rate, provide food security and brings about poverty eradication. The enabling variables include the population of Nigeria – 180 million people, various developmental agricultural projects, her landscape of which 60 percent of it is water based, the arable land, the aquatic culture, the entrepreneurs in agriculture, the public service environment, the funds available for agriculture and level of consumption of agricultural products are favourable factors to be utilized by all actors of the Nation. Hence there should be a diversification of the entrepreneurship education focus towards capacity building and utilization of Agriculture to creating employment, generate FOREX, provide food security and improve living standard to eradicate poverty.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the various components reviewed and conclusion of this paper, the following recommendations are made:

1. Agriculture should be adopted as a very important element of entrepreneurship education in all higher institutions.
2. Political will on the part of government has to change by reducing interest rate and increasing budgetary allocation to agriculture with adequate provision of modern farm implements to enhance the nation's capacity and improve interest in agriculture.
3. Synergy should be formed among entrepreneurship development, agriculture and higher education curriculum since none of this variable can function viably in isolation to eradicate poverty.
4. There should be special grant for entrepreneurs in agriculture and agro-based initiatives so as to boost students' interest in this direction.
5. All stake holders' hands must be on deck to give agriculture a chance to moderate between entrepreneurship skill development and agriculture towards actualizing high job creation tempo, self sufficiency and realistic poverty eradication.

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