

PROPENSITY FOR AGRIPRENEURSHIP AMONG STUDENTS OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE, ABEOKUTA, OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the propensity for agripreneurship among the students of Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. 150 final year students of agriculture in the University were selected using the multistage sampling methods and questionnaire was used to gather data while descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. Majority (68.1%) of the students were male, 66.0% had no prior rural experience. Students had high propensity for agripreneurship ($\bar{x} = 53.29$) with Curriculum in agriculture adjudged as moderately satisfying agripreneurial needs ($\bar{x} < 2.0$). Sex ($\chi^2 = 12.196$, $p < 0.05$) and students' satisfaction with the university training curriculum ($\chi^2 = 46.626$, $p < 0.05$) had significant relationship with propensity for agripreneurship. It is recommended that the quality of curriculum should be improved to meet students' agripreneurship development needs while also making agriculture more attractive through improved access to capital and rural infrastructure.

Keywords: Curriculum, Agripreneur, Agripreneurship propensity, Agripreneurial needs, Agriculture

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, the creation of Universities of agriculture with mandate in agriculture and rural development was aimed at developing human capital in agriculture; arming Nigerian youth with the passion and multiple skills in order to later practice, become independent and eventually job creators. This is because the agricultural sector is one of the most viable sectors with potentials in achieving the sustainable development of eradicating poverty. However, the aim of promotion of agricultural education and services for agricultural development and the attainment of self-sufficiency in food and fibre has remained an illusion. This is partly due to the continued apathy shown to agricultural sector by the products of ivory towers who ought to be the human assets towards achieving food self-sufficiency. This has made the agricultural production landscape of Nigeria to be occupied by the aged who retired to villages only to seek solace in small scale farming as a means of survival.

This marasmic manpower development situation in Nigerian agricultural sector was perhaps the cause of its strong downward spiral trend. Nigeria who was the leading exporter of cash crops back in the 1960's and the early 70's with over 60% share of global palm oil export, 30% share of groundnut, 20-30% of global groundnut oil and 15% of global cocoa exports had by the year 2000 had 5% or lesser export share of these crops (Central Bank of Nigeria CBN, 2011). The continued recession in the agricultural sector of Nigeria has made its dominance in the export of agricultural produce to have been eclipsed by Indonesia, United States of America (USA), China and Argentina and few African countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, Cote De voire and Ghana (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development FMARD, 2011). While these countries have begun to evolve in world cash crops export, Nigeria remains among the food-deficit, poor and unemployment ridden nations in Africa.

Despite its endowment with natural resource and its riches in human and material resources, a situation which ordinarily should translate into better economy and an enhanced standard of living for its citizenry, Nigeria appears to be entangled in a poverty trap. The population of the poor has increased from 64.451 million in 2013 to 82.9 million in 2019 (World Bank, 2016; National Bureau of Statistics NBS, 2019). The problem of poverty in Nigeria is further compounded by unemployment which has seemingly become an albatross around the necks of the average Nigerian graduate.

The total number of unemployed increased from 17.6 million in 2017 to 20.9 million in 2018 indicating an increase from 18.8% to 23.1% unemployment rate in the country. Youth unemployment increased from 13.7% in 2015 to 29.7% in 2018 (NBS, 2018). Unemployment rate by educational grouping was highest for persons with postsecondary school certificate /graduates recording 29.8% in 2018 from 12.37% in 2015 (NBS, 2018). With these figures, it is obvious that the tree of unemployment is growing progressively in Nigeria. Thus, unemployment has become visibly the nightmare of an average Nigerian undergraduate. The existence of a huge unemployment gap despite a large turnout of graduates from the various Universities, Colleges and Institutes of agriculture is an indication that propensity for agripreneurship is rather low or that the pre-conditions for successful agro-entrepreneurship are largely absent. Thus, there is the need for the encouragement of agro-entrepreneurship among students in the Universities of agriculture in order to produce real home grown innovators capable of steering the Nation to economic advancement. Trainings in agriculture are expected to be such that satisfy the entrepreneurship needs of trainees rather than mere certification in agriculture and its related fields. Institutions in the country

in line with the regulations so the various regulating agencies such as the Nigerian University Commission (NUC) and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) have come up with initiatives and programmes that assist students in getting such trainings.

The initiative of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta Nigeria at introducing the Community Based Farming Scheme is laudable and in line with Navarro (2004) that, students should learn about and experience their environment to be prepared for competing in the dynamic workplace typical of agricultural farm. Apart from familiarization with rural area which the initiative facilitates among students, the scheme has a rural development undertone. The scheme is an innovation diffusion process which can simply be described as *“bringing farmers to farms and farming to farmers.”* Bringing farmers to farm in the sense that proven practices which are the results of research carried out within the University are transferred to designated rural areas under the scheme through on farm demonstrations by students. On the other hand, students learn about indigenous practices which may in future enhance performance in their chosen career - *bringing farming to upcoming generation of farmers.*

Moreover, the Community Based Farming initiative broadens students' intra and inter-ethnic/ cultural experience. This corroborates Bruening and Frick (2004) which assert that, companies of today want graduates with cross-cultural experiences; agricultural farms inclusive. The exposure will make the students to adapt easily if employed in commercial farms cited in rural area or if eventually they may need to settle down in rural areas in quest of the benefits which agripreneurship promises.

It is against this backdrop that the study was carried out to assess propensity for agripreneurship among the students of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta with the following objectives: 1. students' satisfaction with the training curriculum in relation to their agripreneurship development needs; 2. propensity for agripreneurship among the students. The hypothesis of the study is stated, thus, there is no significant relationship between the students' socio-economic characteristics and propensity for agripreneurship.

METHODOLOGY

The study area is the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. The University was one of the two Universities of Agriculture established by the Federal Government of Nigeria in January, 1988. Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta has a tri-podal mandate of teaching, research and extension services in agriculture. The University operates a collegiate system, presently with five colleges of Agriculture and agriculture related courses, namely; College of Agricultural Management and Rural Development, College of Plant Science, College of Animal Science, College of Veterinary medicine and College of Food Science and Human Ecology. Over the years, the population of students has continued to increase with more students being admitted into the various departments of Agriculture. The population of Undergraduate students in the core Agricultural Science courses is 5,257 as at 2011/2012 academic session.

Multi-stage sampling method was adopted in selecting a sample for this study. The first stage involved the categorization of agricultural course into departments with the total number of final year students being noted as 744. Stage two was the

random selection of 20 percent of all the final year students in each department. This gave a total of 150 students as the sample size of the study. Primary data were collected through questionnaires administered on the students. However, only One hundred and forty four (144) students returned the completed questionnaires. The questionnaires consisted of 3 sections addressing each of the variables in the study objectives. The questionnaire was tested for content validity (using 3 experts in agricultural extension and 2 in entrepreneurship studies as panel of judges) and reliability (using the test-retest method over 1 month period). The instruments were evaluated by the experts and their suggestions incorporated in the final draft. A reliability coefficient of 0.87 was obtained. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation), Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Chi-square analysis.

Agripreneurship propensity of students was measured based on responses to twenty questions rated on a four-point Likert rating scale ranging from 1 to 4. The scores ranged from 20 to 80. Thus, Scores ≤ 32 was rated as Low, 33 - 40 was rated as Average, 41 - 56 was rated as High while scores above 56 was rated as Very High propensity for agripreneurship. Students' satisfaction with the training curriculum in relation to their agripreneurship development needs was rated on a four-point Likert rating scale of One (1) to four (4) with the connotations: 1-Not satisfied, 2-Moderately satisfied, 3-Satisfied, 4-Extremely satisfied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

Table 1 shows that majority (68.1%) of the students were male. This confirms that the study of agriculture is being embraced by more male. However, the 31.9% being female corroborates the findings of Ogunlela and Muktar, (2009) that, females are not mere "bench-warming" spectators, even in the midst of the male-dominated profession. The mean age was 23years indicating that most of them were in their active age. Majority (84.7%) were pre-service students who had never worked before enrolling for a degree in agriculture. This corroborates the findings of Oladele, Subair and Thobega (2011) that a large proportion (70.5%) of the students of Botswana College of Agriculture were between the ages of 20 and 24 years and 72.0% being pre-service students. Most of the students (55.6%) subsisted on meager monthly upkeep allowance of less than or ₦10,000 and few (31.9%) had parents whose monthly net worth was over ₦100, 000. The financial status of the students and those of their parents have implications on the entrepreneurship development propensity of a child, most especially the agriculture related business. Ali, Topping, and Tariq (2011) identified parent's financial status having influence on entrepreneurial intention of potential entrepreneurs in Pakistan. Start-up capital, especially credit is a bane to micro-enterprise development. Therefore, without easy access to capital, most especially for youth with a clear cut vision for micro-enterprise development, Nigerian may continue to rise on the ladder of world unemployment and poverty rating. The Table further shows that majority (66.0%) of the students had no prior rural experience. This includes 52.8% who only by the opportunity of Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme/Farm Practical Year (SIWES/FPY) lived in rural setting for just a year during the course of their study in the University. 34.0% of the students actually had a prior rural habitation experience apart from the SIWES/FPY experience. This implication is that this may influence their orientation to towards farming especially in the

rural area. Family background is important variable that has been considered to contribute to the entrepreneurship intention (Mengesha, 2020).

Table 1: Socio economic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Percentage	Mean	S.D
Age (years)			
20-23	47.9	23.6	2.14
24-26	45.8		
27-30	6.3		
Sex			
Male	68.1		
Female	31.9		
Monthly up-keep allowance (₦)			
≤10,000	55.6		
11,000-20,000	28.5		
>20,000	7.3		
Un-disclosed	9.7		
Parents' net worth (₦)			
≤ 20,000	9.0		
21,000-40,000	7.6		
41,000-60,000	7.6		
61,000-80,000	11.8		
81,000-100,000	13.2		
>100,000	31.9		
Undisclosed	34.0		
Rural experience/habitation			
Lived in rural area	34.0		
SIWES/FPY experience	52.8		
No rural experience	13.2		

Source: Field Survey, 2013.

Students' satisfaction with training curriculum in agriculture in relation to their agriprenurship development needs

Table 2 shows that the students were of the opinion that the Universities Curriculum in Agriculture moderately satisfied their Agriprenurship development needs (\bar{X} =2.82). This implies that although Nigeria curriculum in agriculture is on the right track of agriprenurship development, there is the need to improve on the training approach. This negates the

criticism by Emeh (2012) that Nigeria educational curriculum is not being supportive to skills development and possibly suppresses entrepreneurial characteristics.

Table 2: Students’ satisfaction with Nigeria curriculum in agriculture

Students’ satisfaction with training curriculum	Percentage	Mean	S.D
Extremely satisfying	15.3		
Satisfying	52.8	2.82	0.68
Moderately satisfying	30.6		
Not satisfying	-		

Likert scale: Not satisfied = 1; Moderately Satisfied = 2; Satisfied = 3; Extremely satisfied = 4.

Source: Field Survey, 2013

Students’ propensity for agripreneurship based on social, economic, environmental and personal characteristics

Table 3 reveals that agricultural students of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta had a high propensity for agripreneurship ($\bar{x} > 2.0$) against most of the various parameters (social, economic, environmental, personal characteristics) on which the verification of the agripreneurship propensity was based. The table shows that students’ belief that starting one’s own business is a great opportunity for success is high ($\bar{x} = 3.06$). This can be attributed to their willingness for independence, their exposure during their training in the University which gives them a strong idea of where to start if they decide to go into agribusiness, perception of skill, ability to overcome risk and optimism on the success of small scale agribusiness’ success in the face of the present economic situation of Nigeria ($\bar{x} > 2.50$). The Table further shows that, although students expressed a high propensity for starting their own agri-business in not more than three years after graduation, they expressed pessimism on take-off capital ($\bar{x} = 2.33$). The pessimism on take-off capital contravenes Grilo and Thurik (2004) who found in Europe and the United States that entrepreneurial interest is not significantly affected by perception about financial obstacles. As part of the conditions towards overcoming financial obstacle which is the bane to enterprise development in Nigeria, loan schemes with friendly interest decisively packaged for agricultural graduates should be put in place. Despite the high propensity of students for agripreneurship, accepting to live in the rural area is almost an unacceptable option ($\bar{x} = 2.38$). This suggests the need to embark on aggressive rural infrastructural development thereby making the place conducive and comfortable for to live and do business. This will also reverse the trend of rural-urban migration.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents based on Personal Rating of propensity for agripreneurship based on different parameters

Statements on Agripreneurship propensity	Mean score	SD
My knowledge of where to start if I decide to go into agri-business	2.91	0.72
Perception of skills necessary to successfully operate my own agri-business	2.73	0.75
Perception of ability to overcome high risk level of agri-business	2.53	0.74
Assurance of how to keep up with all aspects of running my own agricultural enterprise.	2.65	0.82
Belief that starting one's own business is a great opportunity for success.	3.06	0.89
Willingness for independence i.e do not like working for someone else.	2.94	0.87
Preference for starting small scale agri-business than getting a job as a middle manager with a larger company	2.67	0.73
Perception of capacity to operate a small agri-business successfully.	2.83	0.75
Belief in the possibility of small agri-business owner to be successful in the face of the present Nigeria economy.	2.83	0.82
Belief that successful small farm owner can earn respect in the society than a middle company manager.	2.66	0.92
Belief that, with all the government regulation and red tape today, it is not difficult to run a profitable agro enterprise	2.47	0.80
Belief that I can only venture into agribusiness if the policy on export is encouraging	2.53	0.81
Tendency of starting my own agri-business in not more than three years after graduation and quilting a monthly paid job	2.72	0.91
My aspiration/vision for agripreneurship or agri-business	2.67	0.83
Accepting to live in rural area and develop gradually than going to cities in search of a job.	2.38	0.88
Opinion that take off capital is not bane on being an agripreneur and taking loan is not a threat	2.33	0.89
Opinion that non affiliation with rural background is not a bane to becoming an agripreneur	2.44	0.87
Opinion that appeal for a startup culture is an important motivational factor in being an agripreneur	2.47	0.75
Belief in the natural gift to be an agripreneur	2.48	0.80
Belief that having no family member who is an agripreneur is not a barrier	2.88	0.93

Note: Likert rating scale (1. Low; 2. Average; 3. High; 4. Very High)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Aggregate rating of Agripreneurship Propensity Scores of Agricultural Students

Table 4 shows that students of Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta had a high propensity for agripreneurship ($\bar{x} = 53.29$). Thus, it is opined that the various government would create an enabling environment in form of capital, access to land, enhanced rural infrastructure and a formidable agricultural extension service which would be of assistance to these upcoming generation of agripreneurs. This will go a long way in supporting the Federal government's vision for agricultural transformation of Nigeria through agripreneurship development.

Table 4: Agripreneurship propensity among the respondents based on total scores

Level	Percentage	Scores	Mean	S.D
Very high propensity	34.0	56-80	53.29	9.65
High Propensity	50.7	41-56		
Average Propensity	13.2	33-40		
Low Propensity	2.1	20-32		

Source: Field Survey, 2013

Relationship between Students' socio-economic characteristics and Agripreneurship Propensity

Table 5 shows a significant relationship between sex and levels of agripreneurship propensity of students of agriculture ($\chi^2 = 12.196$, $p < 0.05$). This corroborates Wang and Wong (2004), who analyzed seven background factors influencing students' entrepreneurial interest and found that gender was the most significant factor among students in Singapore with females being less entrepreneurial. However, no significant relationship was found between other socio-economic characteristics of the agricultural students and their agripreneurship propensity levels implying that these characteristics cannot influence agripreneurship propensity. Having rural experience or perpetual affiliation to rural setting either because the parents reside in rural area or have rural background does not dictate whether a student will eventually be an agripreneur. Ordinarily, it could be surmised that students with rural background and whose parents have the financial wherewithal may have more access to land and capital for agricultural purpose and thus making them have a higher tendency of investment in agriculture, however, propensity for agripreneurship is a personal decision of an individual and not as a function of availability of land of capital for investment. The negative ($r = -0.041$ and -0.125 , $p > 0.05$) recorded for monthly upkeep allowance and the parents' monthly net worth implies that students with high monthly upkeep allowance and whose parents are rich may not choose to be an agripreneur, rather they may have preference for other enterprises apart from agriculture.

Table 5: Relationship between the students' socio-economic characteristics and agripreneurship propensity

Socio-economic	χ^2	Df	r-value
Sex	12.196*	3	
Religion	4.790	6	
Rural life	4.411	3	
Rural affiliation	3.672	3	
Monthly Upkeep			-0.041
Parents' Monthly net worth			-0.125

*P ≤ 0.05

Relationship between Students' satisfaction with Training Curriculum and Levels of Agripreneurship Propensity

Table 6 shows that there is significant relationship between students' satisfaction with training curriculum and their propensity levels for agripreneurship ($\chi^2 = 46.626$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that the training curriculum in the Nigerian University of Agriculture under study has positive impact in the decision of the students (trainees) towards investing in agriculture. Therefore, the curriculum implementation procedure should be targeted at producing true indigenous agriculturists that are capable of transforming the agricultural sector of Nigeria. Thus, apart from students being exposed to rural setting, they should be allowed to spend part of their compulsory one year industrial experience of the farm practical year leaning about modern equipment and current practices in the agricultural industry.

Table 6: Relationship between Students' Perception of Training curriculum and Levels of Agripreneurship Propensity

Students' Perception of Training Curriculum	χ^2	Df
Levels of Agripreneurship Propensity	46.626*	9

*P ≤ 0.05

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Students of agriculture at the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta were of the view that University Curriculum in Agriculture moderately satisfied their agripreneurship development needs. Furthermore, the students had a high propensity for agripreneurship upon graduation from the university. Students' satisfaction with training curriculum and sex are related to propensity for agripreneurship. In order to drive the attainment of sustainable development in the country through youth involvement in agriculture, the quality of the curriculum in agricultural training should be improved to meet the students' agripreneurship development needs while making the sector more attractive to the youth for investment in through facilitating access to capital and land, and improved rural infrastructure while incorporating policies that are gender sensitive.

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