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STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL FARMING ACTIVITIES (SFAS) IN  
IKORODU AREA OF LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

*Agricultural self-reliance can be achieved through revitalizing the desire of youths for farming and regenerating the interest of the adolescent in farm work. The study was conducted to determine the level of participation of secondary school students in farming activities. One hundred Senior Secondary Students were sampled and the data analyzed with descriptive statistics. Sixty (60%) percent rated themselves as having enough knowledge and mastery of the subject matter to succeed in Agricultural profession. Consequently sixty-three (63%) percent were motivated to offer the course by their teachers while others were influenced by their parents, friends and farmers around. Nevertheless, sixty-two (62%) percent have their own farms at home only twenty-eight (28%) percent were interested in taking up farming as a career. Agricultural Science teachers were urged to show more dedication to the practical agriculture to motivate students and develop their interest in agricultural profession as a career.*

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is blessed with vast land resources, about 71.2 million hectares of cultivable land out of which only 6.34 million hectares were cultivated (Shiamoya, 1985). This means that less than nine (9%) percent of the total agricultural land was cultivated. More human resources need to be mobilized in addition to the existing 15 million farmers to make effective use of these vast land resources in order to attain self-sufficiency in food production. In recognizing the population of the Nigerian youths and the role they play in Agricultural development. Akpan (1985) asserts that the neglect of the contribution of the youths in Nigeria will amount to ignoring 80% of the human resources while he contends that if our present leader in agriculture can put down their manuscripts briefly and help to organize a truly Nigerian youth movement, the long term solution to the country's food shortage would have been found. It was against this background that the school-to-land programme was launched in 1984 by the federal military government for the mobilization of young school leavers and a necessary appendage was the school agricultural programme started by the various State Governments through the State Ministry of Agriculture and National Resources with these objectives (Mohammed, 1985).

- (i) To make the youths appreciate the dignity of labour.
- (ii) To enable the school children contribute to food production.
- (iii) To develop the interest of youths in modern techniques of agriculture.
- (iv) To enable the youths appreciate the problems of the Nigerian farmers.
- (v) To foster a desire in the children to improve agriculture in Nigeria.
- (vi) Lastly to enhance rural development.

The youths played a very dynamic role in agricultural production as a major source of farm labour available to the farm families in Western region before the introduction of free primary education in 1955. Through their exposure to farming, majority of the youths had taken up farming as full time profession. With the introduction of free primary education, many parents sent their wards to the primary school. They finished and went to bigger towns and cities to attend secondary and tertiary institutions. Their long sojourn in schools resulted into shortage of farm labour, scarcity of food and general decline in agricultural production. On the completion of their studies, they drifted away from the farms as they found it difficult to return to the farms because they no longer see agriculture as a profession that fits into their educational qualification but a profession for their illiterate parents, a dirty job, destined for the poor. This fueled their negative attitudes towards agriculture as a course of study and they never considered taking it up as a profession. Attitudes formed by an individual about an idea is a learnt thing which can be positive or negative and can be changed through knowledge, further learning and participation in the activities over time. Hence this study was conducted to determine the extent of the students' participation in agricultural activities in school and the effects on positive attitude formation towards agricultural career.

## METHODOLOGY

The area of study was Ikorodu Local Government Area, one of the five LGAs of Lagos State that were created under the 1976 Local Government reform. It is situated in the Northern part of the state bordered by Ogun State, in the south by the Lagoon and in the West by Somolu and Kosofe Local Government Areas. The Local Government Area had about twenty-five secondary schools from which ten schools were randomly selected. The Local Government Area was zoned into five and two schools randomly selected from each zone. These zones are Odogunyan, Ikorodu, Bayeku/Oreta, Igbogbo and Ijede/Igbokuta. From each of the school, ten agricultural science students were randomly sampled from the senior secondary class three (SSIII). Questionnaire was used to collect information from the students. The data were analyzed with descriptive statistics.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The respondents were sixty-eight (68%) percent to thirty-two (32%) percent female. Their ages ranged from sixteen (16) to twenty-four (24) years, while the average age was eighteen (18) years. Their parents' occupation was mostly farming with few artisans. Most of the schools did not have enough agricultural teachers. Few (10%) schools did not have land for agricultural practicals. Also some (30%) schools did not have the young farmers club.

### Knowledge and skills gained by students

None of the schools had enough agricultural teachers to go round the students' classes. The highest number of teachers in the schools was four which is grossly inadequate for any school having six classes to teach from JS I - III, and SS I while some (10%) schools have just one teacher for six classes. The average number of teachers was about two and a half (2.5) teachers.

The period of practical classes in each school ranged from none in some (10%) school to once monthly 40% twice in 10% of schools. Four and eight times monthly in twenty (20%) percent of schools. These practical periods were grossly inadequate for meaningful skills to be imparted to the students for them to gain the confidence of wanting to start a farm after their course of study.

On the knowledge and skill gained from the school farming activities the students did not acquire enough skill to be able to start a farm of their own after schooling. Nevertheless, they have enough knowledge to be able to pass their examinations on the average though some students (15%) rated themselves below average in knowledge, while some (25%) of the students rated themselves above average in knowledge. Forty-eight (48%) percent rated themselves as adequate while only twelve percent (12%) rated themselves as very adequate.

### Participation of students

Ninety (90%) percent of the students have school farms and participated in the practical agriculture in their schools. They operated mostly mixed cropping according to sixty (60%) of students. Some twenty percent (20%) operated mono-cropping system. Though only thirty four percent (34%) of the students were farmers' children, sixty two percent (62%) of the students have personal farms of their own at home; twenty three percent (23%) visited their private farms once a week. Thirteen percent (13%) visited theirs twice weekly while twenty six percent (26%) visited their farms daily to carry out one operation or the other. They engaged in all the cultural operations ranging from land clearing to harvesting. Fifty-five (55%) percent of them worked on inherited land by their fathers while seven percent (7%) percent claimed that the land was bought.

### Stimulation of Students' Interest in Agriculture

Their parent's occupation ranged from farming by thirty four percent (34%), Teaching by thirteen percent (13%), Trading by nineteen (19%), Civil service by fourteen percent (14%) and Artisan by twenty percent (20%). Nevertheless, twenty eight percent (28%) of the students were stimulated to offer agriculture by their parents that means not all the farmers would want their children to be farmers. Sixty three percent (63%) of the students were influenced to offer agricultural science. This must have been due to the students' personal likeness in the teacher himself and probably not in the subject nor the profession.

Six percent (6%) of the students were influenced by their friends to offer the course. This can be regarded as peer influence for they were likely to be among those that confessed that they have no knowledge to be able to succeed in the subject nevertheless they still offer the course. Three percent (3%) were influenced by farmers around. This group could have been properly motivated even to taking farming up as a profession, for they have been influenced by either the products or the success of these farmers in their vicinity as they watch their activities day in day out.

#### **Career aspiration of students**

Twenty eight percent (28%) of the students were prepared to take up farming as a career in future. Sixteen percent (16%) prefer civil service while forty one percent (41%) wished to further their studies and the remaining fifteen percent (15%) did not respond.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The Students' participation in school farming activities had not in any way influenced their interest to take up farming as a professional career more so when some schools do not have agricultural land for their practical. The teachers were not enough in those schools while the practical classes were not effectively handled to stimulate students adequately enough.

The government should provide the schools with more agricultural science teachers, preferably university graduates who will be more dedicated and experienced in practical aspect of agricultural science.

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