

Community-Based Roles of Agricultural Science Teachers and the Development of the Rural Host Communities in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State

Anthony A. Offiong, Ph.D

Department of Vocational Education
University of Uyo
drtonyoffiong@yahoo.com

&

Baridoma, M. Popnwin

Department of Vocational and Technology Education,
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt
mopbarry@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study determined Community-Based Roles of Agricultural Science Teachers and the Development of Rural Host Communities in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, two objectives social and technical roles of agricultural science teachers were set to guide the study. The sample size for the study was 285 respondents which comprised of secondary school teachers of Agricultural Science, Principals, Vice Principals, students of Agricultural Science and opinion leaders selected using simple random sampling techniques. A structured research questionnaire was used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed that, community development works such as governance, social and leisure related ones, farmers training, cooperative and marketing health and health related are found in rural areas and Agricultural Science Teachers are among the community development agents who perform these roles to improve the rural areas. It was therefore recommended among others that, Rivers State Government and other stakeholders should organize frequent workshops and seminars in development of agricultural science teachers in order to improve their knowledge and skills in community-based roles.

Keywords: Development, Agricultural Science Teachers, Community Development, Community Works, Rural Areas and Rivers State.

Introduction

Teachers of agriculture have played tremendous roles in developing various sectors of the communities; no doubt the history of mankind cannot be complete without their developmental endeavours. Right from the origin, man has always strived to improve his living conditions. This manifested in his various endeavours designed to make life easier. In view of the above teaches of agricultural science ensures that developmental projects are successfully carried out. This is possible because they teach in what may be perceived as a

unique environment when compared to other teachers in secondary schools (Joe, Robert & Raymond, 1990).

Teachers generally instruct not only in classrooms and laboratories, but also on-site at the school farms, ranches and cooperative learning sites. The scope of such instruction directly involves students, parents and other members of the community and usually involves time effort and movement beyond the normal school day and geographical location. Often teachers of agriculture for example in the United States live in small isolated communities (Joe, Robert & Raymond, 1990). But in Nigeria situation especially in the rural areas the teachers of agriculture interacts more with physical environment. These two situations present cultural and physical conditions which may influence their effectiveness as a teacher. Mattes and Carlson (1987) are of the view that retention of quality instructors are always the concern of the rural dwellers and that certain environmental factors influence some teachers' decisions to choose rural teaching not caring that rural communities are characterized by isolation and thus insulation from social trend and changes. In a study on teachers' choice of rural schools, Mathes and Carlson (1987) found that rural teachers rated school size and the cost and pace of living as being more important in their placement decision and that administrative support and the presence of a pleasant school climate are essential for effective teaching and job retention. Community support of rural schools is generally strong because parents are often times directly involved in daily operations. Individualized instruction, peer group teaching and multi-age grouping are considered academic advantages of rural schools (Kindley, 1985).

Teachers in rural schools often work in a "make do" mentality, Cole 1988 stated that lack of equipment deteriorating instructional facilities, plus the presence of trends nationwide to raise educational standards have placed greater demand on already stained budgets, manpower and schedules. A particular aspect of rural teaching that has surfaced in research is that of the ability to teach a broad of subject matter. A survey of rural teachers by Muse (1977) indicated that training for rural educators should include learning to teach with minimum facilities, more training in guidance and counseling, broader subject matter preparation, rural sociology and culture training, training in practical life-support skills and rural economy awareness. In view of the above, teachers of agriculture should ensure that development projects are successfully carried out.

Daramola (1990) highlighted the qualities of a good teacher of agriculture to include good vitality, hardworking and possessing of a cheerful appearance. The teacher is an adult with above average intelligence, trained for a number of years to know his subject matter and how to teach if for practical purposes of the children. He selects what to teach and works to a timetable. He also brings into the classroom his view of his job, his prejudices as well as personal fears and affection. There is a widespread agreement that teachers of agriculture in secondary schools need to improve the academic content of their courses, and also to adequately prepare their students for diverse careers available in the area of science and technology (Sikinyi and Martins, 2002). Therefore teachers of agriculture must be able to assess their environments and make necessary changes to meet the needs of their students

and communities (Shelley-Tolbert, Corroy & Dailey, 2006). Also in the opinion of Kerby (2002) quality agriculture education programme responds to students, industry and community needs, thus teachers' of agriculture must take steps to address these issues.

According to Chanan (1997) the term "community" seems unproblematic, yet it is the keyword that should be analyze while discussing roles of teachers of agricultural science in rural communities. Community refers to the people living in one locality (geographic community) or a group of people having cultural, religious, ethnic, or other characteristics or interest in common (community of interest). Generally, the principal characteristics of a community include the fact that every group of people called a community is characterized by a locality or territory where members nurture, cherish and uphold. They act and behave under common beliefs and values. They have a common way of life, ideas, belief, knowledge, religion, language, architecture, technology and ways of dressing. The preservation of the culture and patterned ways of acting in a community requires that proper counseling and training be done to ensure youths do not deviate and behave anyhow. Hence the agricultural science teachers in order to achieve their multipurpose roles as change agents, community workers, classroom instructors, career counselors and other non-teaching duties whether citizen of that community or not must study and know the norms, belief and value of the people. Thus agricultural science teachers' actions, in-actions and reactions are very vital and necessary in the planning, execution, utilization and maintenance of community programmes and projects.

Statement of the Problem

Rural communities generally lack literate people as compared to urban areas. This is because the educated people who should have brought development to the rural areas usually migrate to urban areas in search of greener pastures and to enjoy basic amenities that make life easy. However, while there are some evidences of developmental works done by other community development agents such as agricultural extension agents and community health officers in community development there is a dearth of information on the contribution of teachers. For teachers of agriculture in secondary schools who as change agents should be involved, technically, in the development of their host communities, most of agricultural science teachers do not accept posting to rural schools and the few that do, operate from the city despite the inconveniences of doing so. This therefore necessitated the need to examine community based roles of agricultural science teachers in rural secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study was to determine the community-based roles of agricultural science teachers and the development of their host communities in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State
Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the influence of the social role of agricultural science teachers on the development of the rural host communities in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State
2. Determine the influence technical role of agricultural science teachers on the development of the rural host communities in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State

Research Questions

The following research questions were asked to guide the study:

1. What are the ways social roles of Agricultural Science Teachers influence the development of the rural host communities in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State?
2. What are the ways technical roles of Agricultural Science Teachers influence the development of the rural host communities in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Significance of the Study

Many communities are lagging behind in terms of development, when all it takes to develop such communities are available. Findings from this study would be beneficial to teachers of agriculture, students of agriculture, community dwellers as well other change agents on how they can be of help to rural communities in order to improve their living standard.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design and the population of the study comprised all the secondary school agricultural science teachers, principals in the 12 public secondary schools in Gokana Local Government Areas of Rivers State as well as 235 village leaders in Gokana Local Government Areas of Rivers State. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 285 respondents made up of 26 teachers of agriculture, 24 principals and 235 village leaders. A structured researcher's made questionnaire was used for data collection. It followed a four point rating scale of strongly agree (4 points), agree, (3 points), disagree (2 points) and strongly disagree (1 point). Responses to the questionnaire were analyzed using mean and standard deviation in answering the research questions.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the ways social roles of Agricultural Science Teachers influence the development of the rural host communities in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Results of research question 1 is presented on Table 1

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on the influence of the social role of agricultural science teachers on the development of the rural host communities in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State. $n = 285$

S/No	Social Roles	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Teachers in rural schools organize counseling to guide the youths on their career choices	3.02	0.68	Agreed
2	Teachers in rural schools coordinate elites/social clubs to award educational scholarship to befitting pupils/students or children of less privilege home	2.87	0.63	Agreed
3	Teachers in rural schools organize sporting festival activities for the community	2.98	0.75	Agreed
4	Teachers in rural schools participate in community cleanup/sanitation exercise	2.94	0.68	Agreed
5	Teachers in rural schools liaise or work with other agencies that may have influence on rural environment and the farmers	2.96	0.71	Agreed
6	Teachers in rural schools give necessary assistance to foreign experts to enhance various feasibility studies in communities for developmental programmes	2.76	0.59	Agreed
7	Teachers in rural schools assist government to collate basic information used for planning developmental programmes in the community	2.90	0.60	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2017 $n = 285$ *cutoff point = 2.50*

Table 1 indicates seven social roles of teachers of agriculture in developing their host community, and all were agreed by the respondents having had mean scores above 2.50. The standard deviation range from 0.59 – 0.75 this show the score were not divergent as they were closer to the mean. This reveals that teachers of agriculture perform social roles in developing their host community.

Research Question 2: What are the ways technical roles of Agricultural Science Teachers influence the development of the rural host communities in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Results of research question 2 is presented on Table 2

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on the influence of the technical role of Agricultural Science Teachers on the development of the rural host communities in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State. $n = 285$

S/No	Technical Roles		SD	Remarks
1	Teachers in rural schools provides the youth up to date information on agricultural careers	2.93	0.61	Agreed
2	Teachers in rural schools organize seminars/workshops for farmers to improve production of their crops and livestock to better their living	3.11	0.69	Agreed
3	Teachers in rural schools teach rural farmers (women) processing of agricultural products	2.54	0.73	Agreed
4	Teachers in rural schools orientate farmers on method(s) of storing perishable products before sales	3.04	0.68	Agreed
5	Teachers in rural schools revive, organize and form co-operative societies	2.84	0.69	Agreed
6	Teachers in rural schools supervise the beneficiaries of agricultural loan in the farm projects	2.92	0.70	Agreed
7	Teachers in rural schools teach the community members different types of food and the nutritive value	2.84	0.72	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2017 **cutoff point = 2.50**

From results on Table 2, it was observed that all the seven technical roles were agreed upon by the respondents having had mean scores above 2.50. The standard deviation range from 0.61 – 0.73 this show the score were not divergent as they were closer to the mean. This means that all the technical roles above were performed by teachers of agriculture in developing their host community.

Discussion of Findings

The result from Table 1 indicated that the seven social roles of agricultural science teachers influence the development of the rural host community. This result agrees with earlier works by Joe, Robert and Raymond (1990) who observed that teachers, of agriculture who teach in rural environments, generally do more than their primary duty of classroom teaching. For they generally instruct in classrooms, laboratories, school farms,, ranches and

cooperative learning sites. The entire community sees them as their teacher, mentor and resource person. The researchers is in line with the assertion that man has always strived to improve the condition of his environment which manifests in his various endeavors designed to make life easier and meaningful anywhere he finds himself.

Also the result from Table 2 indicated that the seven technical roles of agricultural science teachers influence the development of the rural host community. The finding is in congruence with the works of Daramola (1990) who in his own submission highlighted qualities of good teachers of agriculture to include: good vitality, hard-working, cheerful, ability to work with people and ability to carry out his tasks under stressful conditions. In his opinion Kerby (2002) said that a good agricultural education programme must meet or respond to the need of the students, industry and community as it is the responsibility of the agricultural science teachers to address these issues.

Conclusion

The role of community development agents cannot be underestimated in community development programme and the agricultural science teacher as a change agents is very vital and crucial in the planning and implementation of community development programme. They therefore facilitate the social and technical development in rural community of posting where they not only carry out their primary assignment of classroom instruction but diverse other duties to students, parents, community leaders where they are seen as technical experts, academic advisors and resource persons. Therefore the teachers of agriculture should liaise very well with the members of the community, create friendly relationship as they are looked upon as very important in community developing programmes.

Recommendations

On the basis of the foregoing, the following recommendations are made;

1. Agricultural science teachers should always be in constant touch with the community leaders, youths and other members of the community. This will help him understand the people, their problems, aspiration as well as their felt needs.
2. Agricultural science teachers should imbibe the spirit of selfless services in order to impart into his/her host community what he/she acquired from school.
3. Government, and Non-governmental Organization (NGO's), Community Based Organization, (CBO's) and other development agencies should always carry out sensitization workshops and seminars that will equip agricultural science teachers in line with the modern ways of handling community development projects (programmes) for easy implementation.

References

Chanan, C. J. (1997). Role of Community work in community development: *Community Development Magazine*, 10(6), 94-120.

- Cole, B. (1988). Teaching in a Time machine: The made-do mentality in small town schools. *Phi Delta Kapan*, 70(2) 139-144.
- Daramola, O. (1990). Qualities of a good teacher in vocational agriculture at secondary school level of 6-3-3-4 system of education. *Journal of Department of Agricultural Education, University of Benin*, 3:40.
- Joe, G. H. Robert, G. A, and Raymond, F. A. (1990). Factors Associated with western region agricultural teachers' perception of teaching effectiveness: *Journal of Agricultural Education Magazine*, 74(5), 4.
- Kerby, B. M. (2002). Science in the agriculture education curriculum. *The Agricultural Education Magazine*, 74(5), 4.
- Kindley, M. (1985). Little schools on the prairie still teach a big lesson: Nebraska's one-room school houses. *Smithsonian*, 118-128.
- Matthes, W; Carlson, R. (1987). Why do teaches choose rural school? *Education Digest*, 27-29.
- Muse, I. (1977). Preservice programme for educational personnel going into rural schools: clearing house on rural education and small schools. Las Cruces: New Mexico State University.
- Shelley-Tolbert, C.A; Corroy, C. A; and Dailey, A.L., (2006). The move to agricultural science and its impact on teacher education in agriculture. *Journal of Agricultural Education*. 41(4), 51-61.
- Sikinyi, T. and Martin, R. A. (2002). Biosciences enliven the agricultural education curriculum. *The agricultural education magazine*, 74(5), 8-9.