

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT IN AGRICULTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The main thrust of this paper was human resource development in agriculture for sustainable national development. It looked at the concepts of human resource, human resource development in the area of agriculture and gender participation in human resource development. The paper further discussed formal and non formal means of developing man's mind for sustainable national development. Formal education is vital for reducing illiteracy and enhances scientific and technology development. Adult and non formal means of enlightening our rural farmers is very necessary for creating awareness among members of the society in general. Human resource development in the area of agriculture was found to be a pillar for sustainable national development.

Introduction

Nigeria has undergone series of human development since the introduction of western Education by the missionary in 1842 and during these developmental periods, policy makers were concerned with the development of agriculture among other sectors of the economy (FRN 2004). Agriculture accounted for over 70% of the economic development of the nation in the early 60's. Obumneme (2010) stated that it accounted for 71.29% gross national product and 69.51% export goods. These were efforts made to sustain the fast growing economy, and to reduce extreme hunger and poverty. Unfortunately today, agriculture has turned to be the dormant sector of the economy in terms of output, employment, and export. (ADP 2006).

This down turn started with the discovery of oil boom in the early 1970 (Ezeji, 2002). Young men left farming in the hands of aged people, and women, for oil work in the cities without knowing that the oil economy will one day finish. In light of these revelations there is need for the development of human resources in agriculture in order to revitalize and sustain the sector. This could be done through manpower training to reactivate the dormant human resources in agricultural sub-sector, general participation in agricultural development and agricultural transformation.

The Concept of Human Resources:

A Chinese proverb in Ezeji (2002) expressed that if you are planning for one year, plant maize, rice or wheat etc, if you are planning for ten years plant fruit trees; but if you are planning for a 100 years plant man. The proverb depicts the characteristics of human resources development for generation for posterity. Osuoha (2004) expressed that man power development is the production of people who are healthy and with sufficient knowledge and skills to perform various functions that are needed in the society. Mba (2008) noted that human resources means people in a country, organization or individual sector who can be used to increase and accrue wealth to develop the economy of the country. Ezeji (2002) expressed that Nigeria is rich in human resource but poor in effective development of human resources to meet up with the fast technological advancement and globalization. Man is a valuable resource and training of man's mind in initiating ideas and carrying such ideas out is human resources

empowerment. The quality, quantity of goods (products) from a nation depends largely on the dexterity and numerical strength of men representatively of such nation. Men in this context represent human resources. Human resources are therefore trained to be active skillful and mindful members of the nation, developed to empower the nation and enhance national development. Such human resource can be used to develop the fortunes of agriculture for the country.

Human Resources Development in Agriculture for Sustainable National Development

Iwena (2005) expressed that in Nigeria, Agriculture accounts for the three basic needs of life – food, shelter and clothing which is dependent on agricultural products. These products are able to come to the mode of usage through efforts put together by human resources in the area of farming. Human resource development in agriculture is the training, education and production of people who are useful in the society. Such people when empowered will be healthy, skillful, knowledgeable and full of initiative.

The developmental process of man comes through formal and non-formal education given to man to expose him to use his potentials to transform all farms' resources, and to exploit and manage such resources for national development. Ocho (2010) supported the above statement by expressing that human resources is developed by the society for the society. In other words, in the area of agriculture, education develops man and man in turn develops agriculture for national growth. Dewey (1859-1952) expressed that non-formal education is the spring board for formal education. In the area of agriculture, the non formal education is got from our forefathers and the out of school education got from the extension staff. The extension staff influences the local farmers and the youth to adapt to new techniques and skills in farming.

Ahmed (2010), stated that the world is advancing in technology and globalization and as such, there is need to invest in human resource to meet up with the new development. This could be achieved through empowerment of the rural farmers to be literate through out of school education for the rural farmers. They could be thought how to use / operate small machines which are used for cracking nuts, milling cassava, compounding feeds for animals and processing of oil. This will bring about fast means of processing agricultural produce. They could also be developed in using machines for packaging. Both male and female farmers could be trained in Information Communication Technology (ICT). In this form, the farmers are trained to keep proper farm records. Developing human resource in agriculture is necessary in the area of production, processing, manufacturing, and packaging of agricultural products. They are also needed to develop other people through transfer of knowledge. Out of school education to all youth of school age is one of the objectives of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) (Tahir 2001). The aged and the school drop out were not left out in the plan of UBE system. Both school and out of school system of education in agriculture, if effectively implemented, will lead to micro and macro poverty reduction, creation of job opportunities and production of self reliant citizens of the nation (MDG Goal 2006).

Education is the answer to servitude. Atiku (1999) highlighted that many nations live in servitude today because of their inability to develop enough human resources to tap and manage both agricultural and other resources. There is need to revamp agricultural sector because no nation could be said to be rich when her agricultural resources cannot sustain her population.

Educating man in agriculture will help to produce farmers who will make researches, adopt new innovations and new techniques which will lead to sufficient food supply and other agricultural end products which will help in national development. Bonjuwoye (2005) opined that training of human mind in the area of agriculture should start from the formative stage. At this stage-man learns fast and whatever he learns is not easily forgotten. The author further

stated that countries like Britain, America, China and Japan make giant strides in all sectors of the economy including agriculture through the training given to their human resources at their formative stage. Nigeria could also make giant strides in national development through the development of her human resources in the area of agriculture irrespective of gender.

Gender Participation in Human Resource Development for Agricultural Sector:

The traditional African education assigned specific roles to men and women in the pre-colonial and formal education era. In agriculture, men were involved mostly in operation of works that required more energy such as farming (cultivation), wine tapping, blue and black smiting, while women engaged in menial farm operations like sowing, milking, weeding, fertilizer application, harvesting and processing of farm produce (Okorie, 2002). The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) noted that men have left the bulk of agricultural work for women, leaving for cities for jobs they think to be more lucrative (oil sector) while women produce more than 50% of food grown world wide. Since Nigerian agriculture is increasingly becoming a female sector economy, women should be seen as valuable resource to be educated. The formal education encouraged equal opportunities for men and women in all areas (MDG 2006). Out of school education through the extension agents should be organized for the rural women farmers. The extension staff should be well equipped and motivated to perform their out of school service. Also there had been a report of restriction of women farmers by traditional laws in leadership position, in organization, and in gathering (FAO 2005). This could be reduced through education of the rural women farmers. The millennium development goal supports gender equality (MDG, 2006). Gender equality gives the women right to education, right to leadership and so on, thus enhances national development. The FAO (2005) further stated that access of women farmers to agricultural training will develop their technical skills, entrepreneurial skills, knowledge, understanding and encourage active and better performance in agricultural roles, which bring about structural changes, growth from peasantry to mechanized level of farming, hence producing more agricultural end products for developed and developing industries in the nation-all for national development. Although women are taking active part in farming, both men and youth who are still energetic to farm should not be left out in this agricultural training because they are part of national development plan.

Agricultural Transformation:

People erroneously direct their minds to level of economic height whenever the concept of development is put up. Alumond (2010) stated that development involves improving the total circumstances of man on earth. It is concerned with all aspects of people's life, satisfying their spiritual and material needs and granting them mastery over their environment.

Further, Nnamani (2010) stated that development embraces better education to all, (both young and old in the four walls of the school and out of school), good agricultural background, better net work, better health care, an enlightened creative populace, as well as information communication technology and globalization. Only the development of active human resources could lead a nation to attain these great heights. Developing human resources in agriculture should be counted first whenever national development is thought of. Such human resource development could lead to better agricultural transformation for national development.

Action Sought

Further efforts to improve human resources in agriculture should aim at physical and mental energy development directed to successful technological advancement in the country.

The following suggestions are listed for improving human resources in agricultural sector of the nation.

- Training and retraining of agriculture teachers.
- Providing those materials with which to work.
- Establishment of more school of agriculture and research centers.
- Training and equipping more agricultural extension staff.
- Taking teachers factor into consideration through proper funding and motivation, and creating of conducive learning environment.
- Maintaining gender equality in all fields of Endeavour (including agriculture).
- Removal of bureaucratic bottlenecks in matters relating to agricultural development.

The above listed consideration will go a long way in developing man power / human resources in agriculture which can enhance national development.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to discuss the need for training human resources in the field of farming. It is known that no nation will be counted developed without sustainable agricultural produce to feed her populace. Such produce could be made available through man-power input. Man-power input could only be made rightly when man is well educated, through various positive means of non formal education and formal education, science and technology education, adult education as well as community education which were considered necessary for national development. Age should never be a barrier. This fact then calls for the government, individuals and stake holders in the area of agriculture to develop all strategies for human resources development which can enhance national development.

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