ACCELERATING GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AS CORRELATES TO SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the acceleration of good governance through Agricultural Education as correlates to sustainable economic growth and development in Taraba State, Nigeria. Two specific objectives and corresponding research questions guided the study. The study adopted the correlational survey research design. The population for this study was three hundred and seventeen (317) respondents comprising of agricultural educators and agricultural extension agents. The sample size of 187 respondents was drawn from the population using simple random sampling. The instrument for data collection was a 20-item structured questionnaire titled "Agricultural Education and Economic Development Questionnaire (AEEDQ)" with a four point response options of Very highly extent (VHE), High extent (HE), Low extent (LE) and Very low extent (VLE) with a corresponding nominal values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument was validated by three (3) experts and had a reliability coefficient of 0.78. The researchers and three research assistants administered the instrument. Mean, standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) were used to answer research questions, determine the spread and closeness of responses for each item and test the null hypothesis respectively. Findings of the study indicated a high and positive relationship between agricultural education, good governance and sustainable economic growth and development. On the basis of the findings, it was recommended that agricultural education strategies should be promoted as key drivers to sustainable economic development in Taraba State, Nigeria.

Keywords: Good governance, Agricultural education, economic growth, sustainable development

Introduction

Nigeria as an entity is endowed with enormous human, material and mineral resources that if properly utilized can make life meaningful to the teaming populace. However, the effective utilization of these naturally endowed resources depends on a good, effective and efficient governance structure that is put in place at both the national and sub-national entities including the local government area administration. Good governance involves the process of enhancing the prevention, mitigation and adaptation by various societies and entities in response to certain inevitable changes (Rodorff *et al.*, 2019). Similarly, Good governance according to Besancon in Meyer (2018) is the effective provision of services to all citizens. Such services could include security, rule of law, civil freedom, health care, education, infrastructure, fiscal system, and an enabling regulatory environment. Good governance is defined by basic attributes of inclusion, accountability and participation. The systems of governance usually reflect the political and cultural circumstances at national, regional and local levels.

According to Rogers and Hall (2003), effective governance can resolve the allocation of resources and their quantities and is also about preserving and promoting the quality of resources, as well as avoiding or limiting negative impacts. Governance also invariably includes a kind of self-governance by social actors and public–private partnerships in social conflicts, which leads to new forms of policy on multiple levels.

Achieving good governance is both multidimensional and multi-faceted. Various platforms can be used to achieve good governance including the practice of agricultural education. Agricultural education which is an integral part of vocational education is simply described as education that lead to effective and sustainable development.

Agricultural education is the type of education that involves the process of acquiring practical skills and competencies that helps individuals in developing the dexterities which would be ultimately transferred to job opportunity in the society (Eneji *et al.,* 2021). It equips learners with knowledge and skills that youths and farmers will require to benefit from technologies as well as maximize the opportunities presented by the government to boost agricultural productivity and achieve food security (Afolabi *et al.*, 2020). Agricultural education is aimed at exposing, inculcating and developing knowledge, practical skills, competences and attitude (Angbre, 2016). Agricultural education is both a field of study and a vocation. In this light, Afolabi *et al.* (2020) stressed that, agricultural education is both applied science and vocational subject that is taught to learners from the primary school to university level in Nigeria for promoting self-reliance as well as preparation for further studies. Agricultural education is broad-based and multifaceted. Agbidi and Ikeoji (2020) observed that, agricultural Education includes the agricultural extension agents and the teachers of agriculture at all levels either through classroom instruction, laboratory experience (field practical) or supervised agricultural experience (field trip/excursion), for vital scientific information (knowledge) delivery and learning experiences to recipients (farmers and potential farmers) with the aim of producing food to sustain the economy.

The status of agricultural education in Nigeria in the opinion of Eneji *et al.* (2021) is grossly ineffective as a lot of vocational agricultural students and graduates are unable to accomplish simple practical farming activities given the required facilities. This ineffectiveness is largely due to poor governance in utilizing the available resources. This is based on the premise that the government has not equipped agriculturists and farmers with the needed tools to produce adequate food for both consumption and employment generation and hence promote sustainable development. A deliberate attempt at improving agricultural education will create avenues for economic and sustainable development. Sustainable development is the development for today without compromising the gains of tomorrow (Salami, 2013). In a similar vein, Wey-Agbayangi in Akpan and Charles (2013) views sustainable development as the ability of a nation to continuously produce internally, a very significant proportion of basic needs to feed it teeming population. Similarly, Nixon in Uwaneze and Okafor (2013) contended that sustainability is the state of having well balanced, steady and effective use of human material and capital resources for total economic independence and development of the nation.

Furthermore, Osagiede (2014) stressed that sustainable economic development involves the use of natural products and energy in a way that does not harm the environment. Akpanobong *et al.* (2013) stated that the concept of sustainable development covers both environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and socio-political sustainability. The borne of contention here is whether there exists a relationship between an agricultural education triggered good governance and sustainable economic growth and development. The theoretical framework for this study is anchored on Good governance theory. This theory in the opinion of Ekundayo (2017) sets some basic principles according to which a good government, whatever its form, must be run. Such principles include accountability, control, responsiveness, transparency, public participation, economy and efficiency. The justification for anchoring this study on good governance theory is that, with effective governance, issues surrounding the allocation of resources for enhanced agricultural education can be resolved thereby achieving a

sustainable and economic growth and development in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Agricultural education has potentials for sustainable economic growth and development in terms of skills acquisition, food security, capacity building and creation of entrepreneurial opportunities. It is observed that, the status of agricultural education is grossly ineffective as many graduates of the programme even when given the required facilities are still unable to demonstrate the requisite saleable skills needed to produce tangible results. The aforementioned inefficiencies in the status of agricultural education are all traceable to ineffectiveness in governance structure particularly in the allocation of resources and the implementation of viable programmes and policies that are geared towards improving agricultural education. Sustainable economic growth and development directly relates to effective agricultural education programmes both in principles and practice.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the acceleration of good governance through Agricultural Education as correlates to sustainable economic growth and development in Taraba State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. ascertain the agricultural education strategies that can enhance sustainable development in Taraba State, Nigeria
2. determine the good governance indicators that relates to sustainable economic development in Taraba State, Nigeria

Research Questions

1. What are the agricultural education strategies that relate to sustainable development in Taraba State, Nigeria?
2. What are the good governance indicators that relate to sustainable economic development in Taraba State, Nigeria?

Hypothesis of the Study

The following hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance

Ho_1: Agricultural education strategies do not significantly relate to sustainable development in Taraba State, Nigeria

Ho_2: Good governance indicators do not significantly relate to sustainable development in Taraba State, Nigeria

Methodology

A correlational survey research design was used for the study. The design entails the collection and use of data from a given population to determine whether and to what extent, a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables. According to Ajai and Amuche (2015), correlational research uses numerical data to explore relationships between two or more variables. The design was considered appropriate for this study because the study was aimed at exploring the extent of relationship between agricultural education, good governance and sustainable economic growth and development.

The study was conducted in Taraba State. It is bounded in the west by Nasarawa and Benue States, northwest by Plateau State, north by Bauchi and Gombe States, northeast by Adamawa State, south and east by Cameroon. The State has sixteen (16) Local Government areas and two (2) Special Development Areas. The State lies roughly between latitudes 6°25′N and 9°30′N and between longitudes 9°30′E and 11°45′E within the tropical zone with a vegetation of low forest. The State has an average temperature of 27.3°C and about 1053 mm of precipitation falls annually. The major occupation of the people of the State is farming. The population for this study was three hundred and seventeen (317) respondents comprising of agricultural educators and agricultural extension agents who are lecturers in tertiary institutions in Taraba State and the State Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The choice of this population is justified by the fact that, both groups are knowledgeable about agricultural education and are

conversant with developmental issues particularly in rural communities. The sample size of 187 respondents was drawn from the population using simple random sampling. This sampling technique was adopted to give equal opportunity to each of the subjects to be selected without bias.

The instrument for data collection was a 20-item structured questionnaire titled "Agricultural Education and Economic Development Questionnaire (AEEDQ)" with a four point response options of Very highly extent (VHE), High extent (HE), Low extent (LE) and Very low extent (VLE) with a corresponding nominal values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The questionnaire items were on agricultural education strategies that relates to sustainable development and good governance indicators that relates to sustainable economic growth and development. The instrument was validated by three experts. Two of the experts where from the Department of Vocational and Technology Education and one expert from the Department of Educational Foundations (Measurement and Evaluation Unit), both of Taraba State University, Jalingo. The experts were given a draft copy of the instrument and the specific objectives of the study to ascertain both the technical and spelling errors and also ascertain the accuracy of the content. All the corrections made were effected in producing the final copy of the instrument.

A pilot test of the instrument was carried out by administering 15 copies of the instrument to lecturers of Agricultural Education and Agricultural Extension in a private College of Education in Jalingo, Taraba State. The said institution is not part of the study area; however, the respondents have similar characteristics with the target respondents for this study. Cronbach-Alpha reliability method was used to determine the internal consistency of the items. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was 0.78; thus, the instrument was considered reliable and suitable for the study. Data for the study was collected by the researchers and two (2) research assistants. A total of 187 copies of the questionnaire were produced distributed to the respondents. However, out of the 187 copies of the instrument that were administered, only 163 copies were correctly filled and returned for analysis.

Mean, standard deviation, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (*r*) and coefficient of determination (r^2) were used to analyse the data and answer the research questions. Any item with a mean value of 2.50 and above was accepted whereas any item with a mean value less than 2.50 was not accepted. Furthermore the value of *r* interpreted below: .01 - .019 = very low, .20- .39 = low, .40-.69 = moderate, .70-.89 = high, . 90- .99 = very high and 1.0 = perfect relationship.

Results and Discussion

Research question one

What are the agricultural education strategies that relate to sustainable development in Taraba State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of respondents on the agricultural education strategies that relate to sustainable development

S/No	Agricultural education strategies relating to sustainable development	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1.	Fostering effective linkage between agricultural education and the industrial sector to achieve maximum value addition and improve export	3.75	.37	High Extent
2.	Creation of agricultural rural employment opportunities through capacity building training of the farmers and rural dwellers in various fields of agriculture	3.83	.52	High Extent
3.	Embark on farmer education programmes that are capable of discouraging food import	3.55	.74	High Extent
4.	Development of education strategies aimed at enhancing food security	2.98	.62	High Extent
5.	Strengthening of agricultural research and revitalization of the agricultural training through improved technologies	3.15	.64	High Extent
6.	Adequate training of farmers to embark on all season farming through rainfall and irrigated farming	3.21	.71	High Extent
7.	Repositioning of agricultural education to provide occupational entry-level skills in agriculture to interested students at the basic and secondary school level	2.91	.66	High Extent
8.	Intensive training of potential entrepreneurs in the field of agriculture	3.41	.78	High Extent
9.	Establishment of vocational development centres in rural areas to cater for the training needs of the rural adult farmers and their families on new innovations in agricultural production.	2.76	.84	High Extent
10	Continuous professional improvement of agricultural educators to improve their skills and competence in agriculture	3.35	.66	High Extent

Results from Table 1 indicates that, all the 10 items had their mean value between 2.76 to 3.83 signifying that, the respondents have accepted that, all the items are agricultural education strategies that have a high extent of relationship to sustainable development. The standard deviation ranged between .37 to .84, indicating that the respondents were not too far from each other in their responses. The findings collaborate the opinion of Eneji *et al.*, (2021) who asserted that agricultural education is the type of education that involves the process of acquiring practical skills and competencies that helps individuals in developing the dexterities which would be ultimately transferred to job opportunity in the society. The basic human needs that support sustainable development are agricultural products. Akpan and Charles (2013) views sustainable development as the ability of a nation to continuously produce internally, a very significant proportion of basic needs to feed it teeming population.

Research question two

What are the good governance indicators that relate to sustainable economic development in Taraba State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of respondents on the good governance indicators relating to sustainable economic development

S/No	Agricultural education strategies relating to sustainable development	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
11.	Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita	3.60	.75	High Extent
12.	Good management processes	3.43	.75	High Extent
13.	Youth unemployment and under-employment	3.37	.74	High Extent
14.	Implementation of political and administrative management	3.57	.75	High Extent
15.	Global entrepreneurship index	3.47	.92	High Extent
16.	Global corruption index (indicating the level of corruption)	3.62	.87	High Extent
17.	Effectiveness of the rule of law	3.67	.90	High Extent
18.	Global political stability index	3.79	.99	High Extent
19.	Global human security index	3.50	.71	High Extent
20.	Global food security index	3.51	.75	High Extent

Results from Table 2 revealed that, all the 10 items had their mean value between 3.37 to 3.79 indicating that, the respondents have accepted all the items as good governance indicators that have a high extent of relationship to sustainable economic development. The standard deviation ranged between .71 to .99, indicating that the respondents were not too far from each other in their responses. This is in agreement with UNDP in Meyer (2018) who asserted that, good governance can be measured by the following indicators or components; good management processes; the implementation of political and administrative management; effective institutions with quality systems; and a focus on best practice principles such as public participation, openness, accountability, effectiveness and rule of law.

Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis one

Agricultural education strategies do not significantly relate to sustainable development in Taraba State, Nigeria

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (*r*) and coefficient of determination (r^2) of agricultural education strategies and sustainable development

Variable	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	R	r^2
Agricultural Education Strategies	3.49	.67	163	0.87	0.67
Sustainable Development	3.37	.70			

r = correlation coefficient, r2 = coefficient of determination

Key: Value of r =.01-.019 very low, .20- .39 low, 40-.69 moderate, .70-.89 high, .90- .99 very high and 1.0 perfect relationship.

The result in Table 3 shows that the correlation coefficient obtained was 0.87 indicating high relationship. This means that, there exist a significant positive relationship between agricultural education strategies and sustainable development. The same Table also shows that, the coefficient of determination (r^2) associated with the correlation coefficient of 0.87 was 0.67. This coefficient of determination (r^2) indicates that, 67% of sustainable development can be achieved through the adoption of agricultural education strategies. This equally indicates that 33% of sustainable development can be attributed to other variables other than agricultural education strategies.

The above results agrees with National Population Commission (2004), that the major strategies to sustainable economic development include integrated rural development programme to stem the rural-urban development migration, reversal of infrastructural decay, empowerment of the private sector to become competitive and lead the growth process; lifting up of the weak and vulnerable group and general value-orientation. All the aforementioned can be achieved through agricultural education

Hypothesis two

Good governance indicators do not significantly relate to sustainable development in Taraba State, Nigeria

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (*r*) and coefficient of determination (r^2) of good governance indicators and sustainable development

Variable	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	R	r^2
Good Governance Indicators	3.38	.62	163	0.77	0.69
Sustainable Development	3.41	.69			

r = correlation coefficient, r2 = coefficient of determination

Key: Value of r =.01-.019 very low, .20- .39 low, 40-.69 moderate, .70-.89 high, .90- .99 very high and 1.0 perfect relationship.

The result in Table 4 shows that the correlation coefficient obtained was 0.77 indicating high relationship. This means that, there exist a significant positive relationship between good governance indicators and sustainable development. The same Table also shows that, the coefficient of determination (r^2) associated with the correlation coefficient of 0.77 was 0.69. This coefficient of determination (r^2) indicates that, 69% of sustainable development can be achieved if good governance indicators are put in place. This equally indicates that 31% of sustainable development can be attributed to other variables other than good governance.

Conclusion

Agricultural education seeks to prepare and develop students' abilities to make a beginning and advance in farming and to produce farm products efficiently. It is aimed at preparing students for entry level jobs and advanced agricultural jobs. It is one of the pillars of sustainable development. However, for agricultural education to contributes its quota to the sustainable development of any nation, special steps must be taken to ensure good governance. Good governance indicators must be put in place to monitor the level of sustainable development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is therefore recommended that:

1. Agricultural education strategies should be promoted as key drivers to sustainable economic development in Taraba State, Nigeria.
2. Good governance indicators should be put in place to monitor their contribution to sustainable economic development.

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