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ANALYSIS OF ATTITUDE OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE STUDENTS TOWARDS TEACHING PRACTICE EXERCISE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ESSIEN UDIM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, NIGERIA

EKONG, Monica Edet
Department of Guidance and Counseling
Faculty of education, University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria
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DAVID Okey *BA, LLB, BL, ANIPR*
Civil Liberty Organization
Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria
Email Address: daveaugusting435@gmail.com
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Abstract

The study examined the relationship between attitude of agricultural science students towards teaching practice exercise in secondary schools in Essien Udim Local Government Area. The population of the study consisted of 1489 secondary school students from Essien Udim Local government. The study adopted survey design, while random sampling technique was used in selecting the 148 respondents. The instrument for data collection tagged "attitude of agricultural science students towards teaching practice exercise in secondary schools Questionnaire (AASSTPESSQ)" was administered to 148 respondents. The instrument was vetted by two experts in test and measurement. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson analysis. The findings show that attitude of agricultural science students towards significantly affect teaching practice exercise in secondary schools. from the findings, it was recommended that teaching Practices should be seen by all as a panacea for high student performance in not only the public secondary schools but also n private secondary schools and teaching practice by undergraduate students should be such that can cause motivation of student with the resultants effect on their academic performance

Keywords: Attitude; Agricultural Science; Students; Teaching Practice;

INTRODUCTION

The role of agricultural science education in the lives of individuals and in the advancement of science and technology for the development of food, raw materials, and sources

of income for mankind and the society in general is very crucial. Agricultural science literacy, which is the gateway to achieve food, natural raw material (of plant and animal origin), and sources of income for advancement and economic survival, of a country is achievable through agricultural science education. The influence of agricultural science on a nation and its citizens could be seen from the production of basic human needs to educational, technological and economic advancement. The steps scientists take during agricultural scientific investigation (science processes) and agricultural scientific products draw the attention of the society to the fact that agricultural science makes life comfortable (Hillison, 2006)

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood for Nigerian and therefore teaching the subject in secondary schools effectively is very important (Mwangi and Mwai, 2007). Before independence in 1960, agricultural science was taught in primary schools to the Africans only, and the method of teaching particularly the practical work made the subject unpopular (Ngugi, and Kitalyi, 2007). However after independence, agricultural science has been incorporated into the school curriculum. This has given it importance comparable to that of other examinable subjects in the secondary school curriculum. With regard to teaching agricultural science in secondary schools, during the period between 1965 and 1976, the United States Agency for International development, (USAID) played a prominent role in supporting the introduction of agricultural science in secondary schools by financing the building of workshops, equipping of schools and the training of agricultural science teachers at Egerton College. However due to the strict conditions that secondary schools had to fulfill before they could be allowed to teach agricultural science, only about 1,000 students were taking the subject at the level by 1966 (Weir, 2007). Agricultural science as an examinable subject was introduced into the 6-3-3-4 education system.

Teaching practice is an important component of becoming a teacher. It grants student teachers experience in the actual teaching and learning environment. During teaching practice, a student teacher is given the opportunity to try the art of teaching before actually getting into the real world of the teaching profession. Student teachers also know the value of teaching practice and as remarked by Menter (1989), they perceive it as 'the crux of their preparation for the teaching profession' since it provides for the 'real interface' between student hood and membership of the profession. As a result, teaching practice creates a mixture of anticipation,

anxiety, excitement and apprehension in the student teachers as they commence their teaching practice. (Morrison en, 2008). Marais & Meier (2007) assert that the term *teaching practice* represents and Cohthe range of experiences to which student teachers are exposed when they work in classrooms and schools. Marais and Meier (2004) further argue that teaching practice is a challenging but important part of teacher training, especially in developing countries like Nigeria, where the effectiveness of the teaching practice can be diminished or eroded by a range of challenges, such as geographical distance, low and uneven levels of teacher expertise, a wide-ranging lack of resources as well as a lack of discipline among a wide cross-section of learners and educators (Morrison and Cohen, 2003).

These challenges, if not addressed, may affect student teachers' performance during teaching practice and may in the long run affect their perception of the teaching profession (Quick and Sieborger, 2005). Education in all its forms has the potential to empower people, by increasing their self -confidence, their capacity to improve their livelihoods and their participation in wider process of social and economic change. Therefore this project work is seeking to investigate attitude of student who specialized in agricultural science toward teaching practice exercise.

Teaching and learning of agricultural science in Nigerian secondary schools has played a vital role in reinforcing interest and awareness for opportunities existing in Agricultural field and demonstrating that farming is a dignified and profitable occupation; and to expand the students knowledge on basic principles and practices in Agriculture, develop students understanding of the value of agriculture to the family and community with a view of promoting self reliance, resourcefulness, poverty reduction, improved food security, problem solving abilities, an occupation opportunities in agriculture.

Regrettably, there has been total lack of agricultural science knowledge and skills by the student who are expected to make best use of the opportunity and the skills acquired through learning. Various reasons have been advanced for this seemingly low reflection of students. While some are of the opinion that students could be influenced by teaching effectiveness of the teachers during teaching practice, knowledge of the subject etc. This disagreement therefore

gives rise to this study which seeks to investigate the influence of attitude of agricultural science students towards teaching practice exercise in secondary schools in Essien Udim Local Government Area.

Student Knowledge of Agricultural Science on Teaching Practice

Teacher knowledge of the subject matter or content knowledge informs more than the instructional approach in the classroom (Spear-Swerling, Brucker, & Alfano, 2005). Understanding central concepts, tools of inquiry and structures of the discipline are crucial for integrated unit and lesson planning. In order to develop authentic cross-curriculum links, classroom teachers are required to have sufficient content knowledge of the subject being taught (De Nobile, 2007). Furthermore, through integrated unit planning, classroom teachers are able to create more authentic instructional and learning strategies which serve to consolidate student learning and develop higher level thinking skills in the students (Davis & Simmt, 2006). Additionally, teachers possessing subject matter knowledge are better able to interpret idiosyncratic student responses, prompt multiple interpretations, trace misconceptions, and plan rich learning experiences for students. When the teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry and structures of the discipline(s) and knows how to utilize several behaviour management strategies to empower the learners' growth and development in the subjects, such a teacher is creating learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for the students.

Knowledge of subject matter is universally considered an essential attribute to effective teaching and successful learning. The most meaningful and lasting learning occur when individuals construct knowledge. The role of the teacher is to help learners build their own knowledge through acting on materials and engaging in meaningful experiences. To create these experiences, teachers must possess an in-depth understanding of major concepts, assumptions, debates, processes of inquiry, and ways of knowing that are central to the disciplines they teach (Davis & Simmt, 2006).

Knowledge of subject matter also implies an understanding of inquiry used in various disciplines. Inquiry training lets students experience the same process scientists actually go

through when attempting to explain a puzzling phenomenon. Employing methods such as inquiry training in the classroom allows teachers to engage learners in generating knowledge and testing hypotheses according to the methods of inquiry and standards of evidence used in the discipline.

In every classroom, it is critical that the teacher evaluate resources and curriculum materials for their comprehensiveness, accuracy, and usefulness for representing particular ideas and concepts. Subject matter knowledge would be essential for the selection and evaluation of curriculum materials and resources.

Teaching in ways that connect with students also requires an understanding of differences that may arise from culture, family experiences, developed intelligences, and approaches to learning. Teachers need to build a foundation of pedagogical learner knowledge (Grimmet & Mackinnon, 2007). To help all students learn, teachers need several kinds of knowledge about learning. They need to think about what it means to learn different kinds of material for different purposes and how to decide which kinds of learning are most necessary in different contexts. Teachers must be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of different learners and must have the knowledge to work with students who have specific learning disabilities or needs. Teachers need to know about curriculum resources and technologies to connect their students with sources of information and knowledge that allow the students to explore ideas, acquire skill, synthesize information, frame questions and solve problems. Teachers need to know about collaboration – how to structure interactions among students so that more powerful shared learning can occur; how to collaborate with other teachers; and how to work with parents to learn more about their children and to shape supportive experiences at school and home (Shulman, 2005).

Acquiring this sophisticated knowledge and developing a practice that is different from what teachers themselves experienced as students, requires learning opportunities for teachers that are more powerful than simply reading and talking about new pedagogical ideas (Ball & Cohen, 1996). Teachers learn best by studying, by doing and reflecting, by collaborating with other teachers, by looking closely at students and their work, and by sharing what they see.

This kind of learning cannot occur in college classrooms divorced from practice or in school classrooms divorced from knowledge on how to interpret practice. Good settings for teacher learning – in both colleges and schools–provide lots of opportunities for research and inquiry, for trying and testing, for talking about and evaluating the results of learning and teaching. The combination of theory and practice (Miller & Silvernail, 2004) occurs most productively when questions arise in the context of real students and work in progress and where research and disciplined inquiry are also at hand.

Shulman's (2006) three categories of content knowledge-subject matter content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curricular content knowledge--are at the heart of much of the current inquiry. What teachers need to know about the subject matter they teach extends beyond the specific topics of their curriculum. Shulman (2006) argues that "teachers must not only "teachers must not only be capable of defining for students the accepted truths in a domain. They must also be able to explain why a particular proposition is deemed warranted, why it is worth knowing and how it relates to other propositions" (p. 9). This kind of understanding encompasses an understanding of the intellectual fabric and essence of the subject matter itself, (Shulman, 1986). For example, while English teachers need to know about particular authors and their works, about literary genres and styles, they also needs to know about interpretation and criticism (Grossman, in press). A history teacher needs detailed knowledge about events and people of the past but must also understand what history is: the nature of historical knowledge and what it means to find out or know something about the past.

According to Bigelow, (2004), while secondary teachers usually major in a discipline, elementary teachers take a range of survey and introductory courses in a variety of disciplines: history, English, sociology, biology, psychology, and art. What students actually learn about subject matter from their college and university liberal arts courses is both an open and a critical question. Yet, to limit the exploration of prospective teachers' subject matter preparation to their university education would be to miss the point. Teachers usually spend 13 years in school prior to entering college. During this period, they take English, mathematics, science etc.

While learning to teach begins long before formal teacher education, it also continues for years thereafter (Feiman-Nemser, 2007). Therefore, this paper looks to practice as an additional source of teachers' subject matter learning, for teachers may learn content from teaching it.

Because of a student's question, a particular textbook activity, or an intense class discussion, teachers often report that, for the first time, they came to really understand an idea, a theme, or a problem that heretofore they had just known as information. This learning from practice actually contributes to the subject matter preparation of teachers.

Every subject matter field, although continually changing and growing, includes specific information, ideas, and topics to be known. This information and these ideas and topics may be subject to disagreement and different interpretation based on competing perspectives within the field, (Young, 2012). Still, no conception of subject matter knowledge can exclude attention to substantive knowledge. The very stuff of the subject, its components and the terms used to classify it differ from one subject to another. Knowledge of mathematics includes specific concepts, definitions, conventions, and procedures (e.g., what a rectangle is, how to find the maximum value of a function). Historical knowledge focuses on differing accounts of people, societies, and events, and on explanations of factors that influence the course, sequence, and relationship of events (e.g., what contributed to the Great Depression or to the suffrage movement in the United States and in other countries). According to Pius, (2011), biology includes knowledge of organisms, their functions and relationships (e.g., respiration and photosynthesis), and the nomenclature that signifies systemic differences. Knowledge of writing includes conceptual, propositional, and procedural knowledge about language, syntax, grammar, audience, and text genres (e.g., constructing a persuasive argument or a compelling narrative).

Beers (2008) argues that while epistemological issues are rarely made explicit in classrooms, they are implicitly represented in the organization and content of curriculum, in the interaction between teachers and students, and in the nature of classroom activity and discourse. The issues critical to knowledge about the subject vary. In mathematics, for example, a critical dimension of knowledge about the subject is the distinction between convention and logical construction. (Dossey, Mullis, Lindquist, and Chambers, 2007). And, college students tend to juxtapose being good at mathematics with being good at writing (Ball, 1988). Such dispositions towards subject matter, while well known, are often overlooked in considering what students learn from studying subject matter.

Students Attitude towards Agricultural Science and Teaching Practice

Psychologists define attitude as a learned tendency to evaluate things in a certain way (Hockenbury and Hockenbury, 2007). These include evaluations of people, issues, objects or events. Such evaluations are often positive or negative, but can also be uncertain at times. For example, one might have mixed feelings about a particular person or issue. Attitude, according to Smith and Mackie (2107), is made up of several different components. Attitudes can also be explicit and or implicit. Explicit attitudes are those that we are consciously aware of and that clearly influence our behaviours and beliefs. Implicit attitudes are unconscious, but still have an effect on our beliefs and behaviours.

Anwer, and Harrison, (2012), stated that People are attracted or repelled to something by their views concerning that thing. What determines whether one will be attracted, get the best and make good representation of an experience is attitude. Attitude is an individual attribute can be developed, influenced and changed over time. Researchers have shown that attitude plays a very vital role in learning and teaching processes (Osborne and Collins, 2003; and Anwer, 2012). The learning and teaching ability of an individual can be increased by improving such individual's attitude (Depaolo and Mclaren, 2006). Attitude arouses student's teacher interest, stirs participation in teaching practice, self confident, Comprehension ability and consequently achievement in teaching processes as reported by (Anwer, 2012).

According to Mwamwenda (2008) student teachers' performance in a particular subject (agricultural science) is determined by their attitudes not ability to study and to impact the gain knowledge to another individual (students). A number of studies on student teachers' attitude and academic achievement correlation found in literatures showed positive relationship between student teacher attitude and their teaching standard. In agricultural science the complexity of the course which involved the theory and practical makes the teaching process more difficult for student teachers to be interested in the course subject as stated by Aremu (2009).

The Status of Agricultural Education in Secondary Schools Worldwide

Agriculture education is instruction about crop production, livestock management, soil and water conservation and various other aspects of agriculture (Schultz, Wiekert, Howard and Dickson 2008). Agricultural education also includes instruction in food education, such as

nutrition which improves the quality of life for all people by helping farmers increase production, conserve resources and provide nutritious foods. The purpose of agricultural education in high schools in the United States is to provide students with the personal academic and career experiences essential for success in the fields of science, business and technology (Schultz Wiekert, Oison, Howard and Dickson 2008). High school agricultural education programme consists of three components namely classroom/ laboratory instruction, supervised agricultural experience (SAE) and future farmers in America (FFA). This study was therefore aimed at findings out the challenges facing teaching and learning of Agriculture in Secondary schools. Classroom curriculum and laboratory exercises provide students with foundation knowledge in agricultural practices, preparing them for careers in food, fiber and natural resource industries. Supervised agricultural experiences provide students the opportunity to experience ownership of their own agricultural enterprises or work in the industry. Examples of SAE projects would be a student raising a crop or an animal, working on a farm or employment at an agriculture business such as machinery dealer. These projects offer "real world" experiences to students as well as practical application of concepts learned in the classroom. Supervised agricultural experience also enables students to develop skills in agriculture related career areas (Schultz, Wiekert Howard, Dickson, 2008). Future farmers in America (FFA) are a national organization that develops student's potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success. Students grow as individuals and leaders through their involvement in competitions, degree programs community service projects and state and national leadership conventions. The combination of the three components of agricultural education, classroom laboratory, SAE and FFA develop well rounded individuals who will become future leaders of the agriculture industry (Schultz, Wiekert, Oison, Howard, Dickson, 2008). It was therefore the interest of the researcher to find out the institutional and non institutional challenges facing learning of Agriculture in schools. By this, recommendations can be made to ensure that the challenges are addressed and to ensure that students are well equipped.

In China during the past decade, agriculture schools have started to take actions systems and to strengthen their vocational programs (Ministry of Education, 1998). There are 360 agricultural schools distributed among the provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities throughout China. Agricultural schools are typically resident schools that require students to pass

standardized admission examinations (Chen, 2000). These schools enroll graduates from junior secondary schools and each program lasts for three or four years. The Ministry of Agriculture undertakes the function of guidance and macro- management for all agricultural schools. Unlike in Kenya, Agriculture is an option subject during the subject selection at form two. Thus, it selection is influenced by different factors which are either institutional or non institutional.

Post primary agricultural education and training is sub – Saharan Africa has generally been very irresponsive to rapidly changing patterns of demand for trainees and failed to adapt and respond to new realities. According to Vandenbosch, (2006), this is putting serious pressure on post – primary agricultural education and training systems, especially because the change in demand profiles is much faster today than ever before. This rapid change in demand profiles is due to radical transformations in the agricultural environment combined with the fast alteration of rural and urban labour markets, scientific advances in the field of biotechnology and information communications technology (ICT). As a result, post – primary agricultural education and training in sub – Saharan Africa currently finds itself very much in an „adapt – or – perish" situation. Also, it has not been re-oriented towards entrepreneurship and the private sector. Thus its increasingly difficult for many graduates to find employment. In a global economy, food processing, storage and marketing are aspects of the production process that have become increasingly important to agricultural producers and thus to agricultural education.

METHOD

Area of the Study

The area of this study was Essien Udim Local Government Area. It is one of the 31 Local Government Councils in Akwa Ibom State. Essien Udim Local Government lies between latitude 5.05 North and longitude 8^0 East.

Research Design

The research design for this study was a survey design. This study was descriptive in nature and it gives a systematic description of the attitude of agricultural science students towards teaching practice exercise in secondary schools in Essien Udim Local Government Area by employing the use of questionnaire to obtain adequate information.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of 1489 SS II students in the public secondary schools in Essien Udim Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Senior Secondary two (SS II) students were used for the study because it was presumed that students would have done Agricultural science subject.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The Sample size of 148 SS students was obtained from public secondary schools in Essien Udim local government area of Akwa Ibom State. The sample size was statistically determined using the sample fraction.

Method of Data Collection/ Instrumentation

The researcher visited each of the selected schools personally with a letter of introduction to the school principals. With permission duly granted by each of the principals, the sampled students' in each of the schools were issued with questionnaire where each of the students was required to complete the items independently. The teachers of the classes involved assisted the researchers in distributing and retrieving of completed questionnaires on the spot. This was accepted by the researcher to ensure that time was utilized judiciously, and to avoid missing questionnaire.

The instrument used by the researcher for this study was a research questionnaire. The questionnaire tagged "Attitude Of Agricultural Science Students Towards Teaching Practice Exercise In Secondary Schools Questionnaire (AASSTTPESSQ) was used to obtain data on the independent and dependent variables presented in both sections A and B of the questionnaire.

Method of Data Analysis.

For clarity, the data obtained were analyzed using descriptive analysis.

Validation AND Reliability of the Research Instrument

The First validation of the research instrument was made by the researcher's supervisor. The items in the questionnaire were properly worded to meet the respondent's level of understanding. Reliability according to Abdellah and Levine (2005) instrument is reliable if it is consistent, accurate and

precise. The questionnaire copies were given to ten (10) people but not part of the study as a pre-test to ensure that the met demand of the study.

ANALYSIS

Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between student knowledge of agricultural science and teaching practice.

TABLE 1

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between student knowledge of agricultural science

Variable	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	r
	$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$		
Teaching practice (x)	4399	132049	65803	0.96*
Student knowledge (y)	2193	32815		

***Significant at 0.025 level; df =146; N =148; critical r–value = 0.138**

Table 1 presents the obtained r-value as (0.96). This value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical r-value (0.086) at 0.025 levels with 146 degree of freedom. The obtained r-value (0.96) was greater than the critical r-value (0.086). Hence, the result was significant. The result therefore means that there is significant relationship student knowledge of agricultural science and teaching practice

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between student attitude towards agricultural science and teaching practice.

TABLE 2

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between student attitude towards agricultural science and teaching practices

Variable	$\sum x$ / $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ / $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r
Teaching practice (x)	4399	132049		
			688860	.82*
Student attitude (y)	2301	36051		

***Significant at 0.025 level; df =146; N =148; critical r–value = 0.138**

Table 2 presents the obtained r-value as (0.82). This value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical r-value (0.138) at 0.025 levels with 146 degree of freedom. The obtained r-value (0.82) was greater than the critical r-value (0.138). Hence, the result was significant. The result therefore means that there is significant relationship student attitude towards agricultural science and teaching practice.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the data analysis in table 1 was significant due to the fact that the obtained r-value (0.96) was greater than the critical r-value (0.138) at 0.025 level with 146 degree of freedom. This implies that there is significant relationship between student knowledge of agricultural science and teaching practice. The findings of this research agrees with the findings of Davis & Simmt, (2006) who opined knowledge of subject matter is universally considered an essential attribute to effective teaching and successful learning. The most meaningful and lasting learning occur when individuals construct knowledge. The role of the teacher is to help learners build their own knowledge through acting on materials and engaging in meaningful experiences. To create these experiences, teachers must possess an in-depth understanding of major concepts, assumptions, debates, processes of inquiry, and ways of knowing that are central to the disciplines they teach. The significance of the result caused the null hypothesis to be rejected while the alternative one was accepted.

The result of the data analysis in table 2 was significant due to the fact that the obtained r-value (0.82) was greater than the critical r-value (0.138) at 0.025 levels with 146 degree of freedom. This implies that there is significant relationship between student attitude towards agricultural science and teaching practice. The findings of this research agrees with the findings of Mwamwenda (2008) who said that student teachers' performance in a particular subject (agricultural science) is determined by their attitudes not ability to study and to impact the gain knowledge to another individual (students). A number of studies on student teachers' attitude and academic achievement correlation found in literatures showed positive relationship between student teacher attitude and their teaching standard. The significance of the result caused the null hypothesis to be rejected while the alternative one was accepted.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, the researcher wishes to draw the following conclusion, there is a significant relation between student knowledge of agricultural and students attitude science on teaching practice. Based on the findings of the study the researcher wishes to recommend that teaching Practices should be seen by all as a panacea for high student performance in not only the public secondary schools but also n private secondary schools. Teaching practice by undergraduate students should be such that can cause motivation of student with the resultants effect on their academic performance.

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