

Influence of Non-Formal Education on Entrepreneurship Skill Development Among Rural Farmers in Ikwerre Local Government Area, Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the article was to determine the influence of non-formal education on entrepreneurship skill development among rural farmers in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State. The study design was descriptive survey. The target population was six hundred and fifty (650) members of the farmers' co-operative societies in the Ikwerre Local Government Area. The sample size was two hundred (200) farmers purposively selected based on the size of farm holdings. Instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire in a 4-point rating scale of agreement. The instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha reliability test and was found to be reliable at 0.79. Data collected were analyzed descriptively using mean and standard deviation. The findings showed that community outreach, on-the-job training and co-operative training programmes were veritable tools for rural farmers' entrepreneurship skill development. Hence, the need to situate agricultural entrepreneurship centres in the rural area was recommended.

KEYWORDS

Education, Entrepreneurship, Influence, Non-Formal, Rural Farmers, Skills

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is important to the development of any nation, including Nigeria. Therefore, for an equitable development to be achieved, rural areas must not be neglected, therefore the need to encourage farmers' participation in the agricultural sector. The agricultural sector today, through non-formal education offers career opportunities in agricultural research, agricultural processing, financial management and other technical areas in agricultural production for the rural farmers to explore.

The introduction of non-formal education programmes to rural communities (farmers especially) is necessary and vital to facilitate food and nutrition security for the nation. Practitioners of non-formal education define the term in various ways, depending on their ideological and intellectual dispositions or their research and academic disciplines and orientations. Hence, there is no one acceptable and adequate definition of non-formal education, because of the diversity and variety of programmes usually covered. Mbagwu and Nwakire (2005) define non-formal education as any organized educational or training activity for school dropout, illiterate rural and urban adults, youths, women, or individual workers aimed at improving their employment and income earning potentials, or giving them general education, which, in some cases, as desired may help them re-enter the formal system

The poor image of persons involved in agriculture, especially in the rural communities needs to be changed. Rural farmers are the ideal catalyst for such change, given their greater prosperity and willingness to adopt new ideas, concept and technology which are all important in changing the way agriculture is practiced and perceived. Such changes could only be affected through non-formal education that would encourage entrepreneurship skill development among them.

Entrepreneurship is all about being enthusiastic and having the capacity of an individual to hunt for investment opportunities within an environment and be skilled in establishing as well as run an enterprise successfully based on the identifiable opportunities. According to Strydom and Nieuwenhuizen (2012), entrepreneurship could be described as the ability of an entrepreneur (someone who manages a business) to combine natural resources, capital and labour with the aim of building a successful business. Therefore, entrepreneurship in agriculture is that which brings innovation, satisfaction and new consumer demands.

Non-formal education extended to rural farmers should be inform of training which major objective is the preparation of rural farmers to enter into agribusiness career, render efficient services and move away from their present level of dependability to self-reliance and employers of labour. According to Osuala (2003), non-formal education gives an individual the opportunity to develop his/her skills, abilities and understanding that will enable him/her handle competently his personal business affairs; develop an understanding of the vocational opportunities inherent in agriculture and assume his/her citizenship responsibilities through enlightened participation in, civic responsibilities.

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