

Promising Self-Reliance through Entrepreneurship-Oriented Agricultural Education

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Abstract

Unemployment and poverty remain among the most pressing socioeconomic challenges confronting Nigeria, with millions of graduates annually entering a labour market incapable of absorbing them. A defining feature of this crisis is the pervasive overdependence on white-collar employment, a pattern deeply reinforced by an educational system that has historically failed to cultivate practical skills or entrepreneurial orientation. This position paper argues that agricultural education must be deliberately and comprehensively reoriented toward entrepreneurship in order to promote genuine self-reliance among graduates. The paper contends that the prevailing structure of agricultural education in Nigeria remains predominantly theoretical, insufficiently practical, and largely divorced from the realities of agribusiness and enterprise development. Grounded in Human Capital Theory and Experiential Learning Theory, the paper asserts that purposeful education combining technical agricultural training with entrepreneurship principles can significantly increase graduate productivity and economic independence. Drawing on a wide body of peer-reviewed literature, government policy documents, and reports from international organisations, the paper reviews existing knowledge on agricultural education, entrepreneurship education, self-reliance, and agribusiness development, identifies critical and persistent gaps in educational practice and policy, and offers targeted recommendations for reform. The ultimate position is that entrepreneurship-oriented agricultural education is not merely desirable but absolutely essential for sustainable national development, rural transformation, and the economic emancipation of Nigerian youth.

Keywords: Agricultural Education, Entrepreneurship, Self-Reliance, Agribusiness, Unemployment, Nigeria

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Introduction

In recent decades, unemployment and underemployment have remained persistent challenges confronting Nigeria's socio-economic development, particularly among graduates of vocational and technical education programmes. Despite the strategic importance of agriculture as a major contributor to national development and employment generation, many graduates of agricultural education continue to struggle with securing sustainable livelihoods. This situation has been largely attributed to the overemphasis on theoretical instruction and the limited integration of entrepreneurial competencies within the educational system. Consequently, graduates often lack the practical skills, business orientation, and innovative capacity required to create employment opportunities for themselves. This disconnect between educational outcomes and labour market demands has intensified the need to reposition agricultural education as a tool for promoting self-reliance and economic empowerment.

Agricultural education has historically been designed to equip learners with knowledge and skills related to crop production, animal husbandry, and resource management. However, in its current form in Nigeria, it remains predominantly theoretical and insufficiently aligned with the realities of modern agribusiness. Scholars have consistently highlighted that the absence of practical and entrepreneurial components in agricultural training limits graduates' ability to translate knowledge into productive ventures (Egbetola & Oyewole, 2024; Olaitan & Ali, 2019; Nwosu & Obi, 2019). Similarly, studies have shown that possession of business management skills significantly influences students' capacity to engage in entrepreneurial activities, particularly among technical and vocational learners (Oyewole & Oderinde, 2022; Ejiogu & Mkpa, 2020). Without these competencies, graduates are more likely to depend on scarce white-collar jobs, thereby exacerbating unemployment and economic dependency.

The growing recognition of entrepreneurship education as a catalyst for self-reliance has shifted attention toward the need for its integration into vocational and technical programmes. Entrepreneurship education equips individuals with the ability to identify opportunities, mobilise resources, and manage risks in dynamic economic environments. Empirical evidence suggests that exposure to entrepreneurship education enhances entrepreneurial intention and

engagement among graduates (Adeyemi & Uko, 2018; Ogunleye & Fadeyi, 2021). Furthermore, the development of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and positive attitudes toward enterprise creation has been identified as a critical determinant of successful participation in entrepreneurial ventures (Ogundipe & Oyewole, 2022; Gibb, 2005). In addition, determinants such as locus of control and peer influence have been shown to significantly shape students' attitudes toward entrepreneurship education, further reinforcing the importance of psychological and social factors in entrepreneurial development (Ogundipe & Oyewole, 2022; Gibb, 2002). These findings underscore the importance of embedding entrepreneurship within agricultural education to enable graduates to transition from job seekers to job creators.

Beyond agricultural education, broader educational research also supports the centrality of entrepreneurial skills in addressing unemployment. Studies have established that social skills, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and positive learning environments significantly predict students' entrepreneurial engagement (Ogundipe & Oyewole, 2022; Timmons & Spinelli, 2004). Similarly, peer influence and locus of control have been identified as strong determinants of students' attitude toward entrepreneurship education in Southwestern Nigeria (Ogundipe & Oyewole, 2022; Drucker, 1985). These findings suggest that entrepreneurship development is not solely dependent on curriculum content but also on the psychological readiness and social environment of learners.

In addition, research has shown that entrepreneurial engagement among students is strongly influenced by contextual and behavioural factors such as family background, exposure, and access to skill-based training (Akpan & Essien, 2021). Where these factors are effectively addressed through structured educational interventions, students are more likely to develop the confidence and competence required for self-employment. In a related study, business management skills were found to significantly correlate with entrepreneurship engagement among technical college students, reinforcing the importance of practical skill acquisition in vocational education (Oyewole & Oderinde, 2022; Eze & Ukpere, 2020). These findings are particularly relevant to agricultural education, where opportunities for enterprise development exist across multiple value chains including production, processing, and marketing.

Furthermore, studies on economic literacy and democratic sustainability have also demonstrated the broader relevance of functional education in shaping productive citizenship and decision-making abilities among learners (Oyewole & Ogundipe, 2025; UNESCO, 2019). Similarly, critical thinking and statistical literacy have been identified as strong predictors of decision-making skills among education students, further highlighting the importance of cognitive and analytical competencies in entrepreneurial success (Oyewole & Olumuyiwa, 2026; Kolb, 1984). These insights reinforce the argument that agricultural education must move beyond technical instruction to include broader intellectual and entrepreneurial competencies.

Despite the acknowledged benefits of entrepreneurship education, its integration into agricultural education in Nigeria remains limited and fragmented. Existing curricula often treat entrepreneurship as an auxiliary component rather than a core element of training. As a result, many graduates complete their studies without acquiring the entrepreneurial mindset and practical experience necessary for agribusiness development. This gap highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive reorientation of agricultural education toward entrepreneurship in order to enhance its relevance and effectiveness in addressing unemployment and promoting self-reliance.

This paper, therefore, argues that entrepreneurship-oriented agricultural education is essential for equipping graduates with the skills, knowledge, and mindset required for sustainable economic participation. By integrating entrepreneurial principles into agricultural training, educational institutions can foster innovation, enhance productivity, and promote self-reliance among graduates. Such an approach is not only critical for individual empowerment but also for national development, given the central role of agriculture in Nigeria's economy.

Conceptual Clarifications

The Concept of Agricultural Education

Agricultural education is a multidisciplinary field focused on developing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values related to agriculture and related industries. It is described by Olaitan and Ali (2019) as a systematic process for building competencies for productive participation in the agricultural sector, and it includes formal instruction at all educational levels in areas such as crop production, animal husbandry, soil science, agricultural economics, farm

management, irrigation, agro-processing, and natural resource management, as well as non-formal training such as extension services and farmer field schools (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2018). Its objectives combine academic understanding with practical competence for application in farming and agribusiness (Garton & Chung, 2018), while also supporting rural development, food security, and environmental sustainability in line with UNESCO's (2019) framework. In Nigeria, it is positioned within vocational and technical education to promote employability and self-reliance (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013), but its effectiveness is often constrained by curriculum quality, inadequate resources, and poor alignment with contemporary agricultural sector needs (Nwosu & Obi, 2019).

The Concept of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship has a rich intellectual history, with Schumpeter (1934) describing the entrepreneur as an innovator who introduces new combinations of productive resources, thereby driving creative destruction that replaces old industries with new ones. At its core, entrepreneurship involves identifying opportunities, mobilising resources, taking calculated risks, and creating value through the establishment and management of business ventures (Timmons & Spinelli, 2004), and Drucker (1985) further emphasizes that it is not an innate trait but a discipline that can be learned and developed through education and training. Contemporary views expand this understanding by framing entrepreneurship as a mode of action characterised by opportunity recognition, creativity, initiative, and adaptability under uncertainty (Gibb, 2002), with key traits including creativity, risk-taking, resilience, and strategic thinking (Gibb, 2005; Adeyemi & Uko, 2018). In agriculture, entrepreneurship refers to the application of these behaviours to agribusiness and farm management, including innovation in production and marketing, establishment of enterprises, and development of value chains such as agro-processing and input supply businesses (Lans, et al., 2014), and it is widely recognised by the FAO (2018) and the World Bank (2021) as a driver of rural development, food system transformation, and economic diversification.

The Concept of Self-Reliance

Self-reliance in education and economic development refers to the ability of individuals to depend on their knowledge, skills, and resources to meet their needs without excessive reliance on external support or formal employment.

Ogunleye and Fadeyi (2021) describe it as the capacity to generate sustainable income through the effective use of acquired skills rather than depending on wages or government assistance. It is a multidimensional concept involving economic independence, personal agency, competence, and psychological confidence, and differs from mere self-sufficiency because it emphasizes the ability to create opportunities and solve problems (Adeyemi & Uko, 2018). Entrepreneurship education strengthens self-reliance by enhancing wealth creation, job generation, and economic independence, particularly in developing contexts (Egbetola & Oyewole, 2024). From a human capital perspective, Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964) argue that education increases productivity and employability by equipping individuals with relevant skills, while Timmons and Spinelli (2004) view skill acquisition as a process that enables individuals to shape their own economic outcomes. In Nigeria, self-reliance remains a key goal of education policy (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013), yet studies show a persistent gap between policy intentions and actual practice, with self-reliance often remaining more rhetorical than functional in educational outcomes (Ihejirika & Agwu, 2022).

Entrepreneurship-Oriented Agricultural Education

Entrepreneurship-oriented agricultural education is an integrated approach that combines technical agricultural training with entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and values. It is based on the understanding that farming knowledge alone is not sufficient for success in today's agricultural economy, where graduates are expected to identify opportunities, develop business ideas, access finance, manage resources, and build viable agribusinesses (Lans, et al, 2014; Gibb, 2005; Mgbeke & Nwofor, 2022). Rather than replacing agricultural content, it integrates entrepreneurship into the curriculum through practical activities, agribusiness exposure, market analysis, value chain development, and innovation-focused learning, alongside reforms in teaching and assessment methods (Garton & Chung, 2018; UNESCO, 2019). This model redefines agricultural graduates as potential job creators rather than job seekers, making it a key strategy for promoting self-reliance and sustainable agribusiness development in Nigeria (Ogunleye & Fadeyi, 2021; Adeyemi & Uko, 2018).

Agricultural Education and Skill Development

A wide range of studies highlights the importance of practical agricultural education in developing the competencies required for effective participation

in the agricultural sector. In Nigeria, Nwosu and Obi (2019) report that agricultural education programmes often fail to convert theoretical instruction into practical skills due to inadequate facilities, limited farmland, and an exam-focused teaching culture, resulting in graduates who lack confidence in engaging with farming and agribusiness activities. This aligns with Olaitan and Ali (2019), who observe that the curriculum has remained largely unchanged for decades despite changes in the agricultural sector, and with Mgbeke and Nwofor (2022), who identify curriculum obsolescence as a key barrier to graduate effectiveness in agribusiness. Similarly, Ejiogu and Mkpka (2020) highlight a mismatch between graduate competencies and industry needs, with graduates showing weaknesses in areas such as farm management, record-keeping, and market analysis, while Akpan and Essien (2021) attribute this partly to instructors with limited practical experience, reinforcing a cycle of theory-based instruction. Eze and Ukpere (2020) further link these challenges to chronic underfunding, which limits access to essential training facilities. International evidence supports these concerns, as Wingenbach and Kahler (2017) and Garton and Chung (2018) show that practical training enhances employability and entrepreneurship, while Lans, Blok, and Wesselink (2014) demonstrate that experiential, enterprise-focused learning increases innovation and business creation among graduates; similarly, countries such as the United States, Germany, and Australia, with strong work-based agricultural education systems, consistently produce more competent and industry-ready graduates, underscoring the value of practical, well-resourced agricultural education.

Entrepreneurship Education and Self-Reliance

The relationship between entrepreneurship education and self-reliance has been widely examined in the literature. Timmons and Spinelli (2004) argue that it equips learners with the skills and attitudes needed to identify and exploit opportunities, thereby reducing dependence on wage employment, while Drucker (1985) maintains that entrepreneurship is a learned discipline that can be developed through structured education. Gibb (2002, 2005) further explains that effective entrepreneurship education fosters behaviours such as risk-taking, opportunity recognition, networking, and persistence, all of which support self-reliant living. Empirical evidence from Nigeria by Adeyemi and Uko (2018) shows that graduates exposed to entrepreneurship education are more likely to start businesses and achieve higher economic independence.

Similarly, Ogunleye and Fadeyi (2021) found a strong positive relationship between entrepreneurship education and self-reliance among technical and vocational graduates, reflected in business ownership and income generation, and concluded that it is a key tool for addressing youth unemployment. This position is supported by UNESCO (2019), which identifies entrepreneurship as a core competency for sustainable livelihoods, and the World Bank (2021), which recommends it as a priority for developing economies, although Ihejirika and Agwu (2022) note that despite policy recognition in Nigeria, implementation remains weak, creating a gap between policy intentions and actual educational outcomes.

Agricultural Entrepreneurship and Economic Development

The literature on agricultural entrepreneurship and economic development is largely consistent in showing its positive impact. Thornton, Ribeiro-Soriano, and Urbano (2011) found that regions with higher levels of agricultural entrepreneurship experience better rural income growth, employment creation, and food system transformation, largely due to innovation, value chain development, and integration of smallholder farmers into markets. Similarly, the FAO (2018) reports that countries investing in agricultural entrepreneurship education tend to achieve higher agricultural commercialisation, improved incomes, and better food security, and therefore recommends entrepreneurship training as a strategic priority for rural development. In the African context, Lans, Blok, and Wesselink (2014) argue that the main constraint is not resources but weak entrepreneurial human capital, resulting from education systems that emphasise production without business skills. In Nigeria, Mgbeke and Nwofor (2022) highlight agribusiness as a key driver of agricultural growth, noting the rise of young entrepreneurs in poultry, fish farming, cassava processing, and organic farming. The World Bank (2021) similarly identifies a shortage of entrepreneurially skilled graduates as a major limitation to agricultural sector development. From a human capital perspective, Becker (1964) and Schultz (1961) interpret this gap as a deficiency in productive investment in education, which must be addressed through targeted entrepreneurial training in agriculture.

Challenges Facing Entrepreneurship-Oriented Agricultural Education

Despite strong support for entrepreneurship-oriented agricultural education, the literature identifies several persistent challenges to its effective

implementation in Nigeria and similar contexts, spanning institutional, financial, policy, and cultural dimensions. At the institutional level, Olaitan and Ali (2019) report inadequate infrastructure, limited laboratory facilities, and insufficient farmland as major constraints, while Nwosu and Obi (2019) add that overcrowding and lack of training resources make meaningful practical learning difficult, undermining experiential skill development as conceptualised by Kolb (1984). Financially, Eze and Ukpere (2020) highlight chronic underfunding of agricultural education, with FAO (2018) noting a broader regional decline in support for agricultural training despite rising sectoral demand, particularly affecting the maintenance of teaching farms and laboratories. In terms of human resources, Akpan and Essien (2021) observe that many instructors lack practical agribusiness experience, a problem also noted by Garton and Chung (2018), compounded by weak in-service training opportunities (Wingenbach & Kahler, 2017; Adeyemi & Uko, 2018). At the policy level, Ihejirika and Agwu (2022) argue that repeated reforms in entrepreneurship education have suffered from weak implementation and poor alignment between policy goals and practice, despite longstanding emphasis on self-reliance in Nigeria's education policy framework. Finally, cultural factors remain influential, as Ogunleye and Fadeyi (2021) show that societal preference for white-collar employment and negative perceptions of agriculture continue to discourage graduates from pursuing agribusiness careers, even when entrepreneurial intentions exist.

Literature Gap

A review of the existing literature reveals an important and underexplored gap. While substantial scholarship has been devoted to documenting the challenges of agricultural education, the potential of entrepreneurship education for self-reliance, and the economic importance of agricultural entrepreneurship, relatively little attention has been paid to the specific mechanisms by which entrepreneurship can be comprehensively and effectively integrated into the formal agricultural education curriculum in Nigeria. The literature tends to address these themes in isolation, and there is a need for more integrated, practically focused scholarship that articulates a coherent model of entrepreneurship-oriented agricultural education suited to the Nigerian context. This paper seeks to contribute to filling this gap by presenting a sustained argument for such integration and by proposing specific, actionable recommendations for reform.

Theoretical Framework

The Human Capital Theory, developed by Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964), explains education as an investment that increases productivity and economic growth, with Schultz emphasizing education, training, and health as capital that yields returns to individuals and society, while Becker demonstrated that such investment improves productivity and earnings similarly to physical capital; Mincer (1974) further supported this by showing that years of schooling and training are strong determinants of income. In agricultural education, the theory implies that outcomes depend on the relevance of skills acquired, and in Nigeria, Eze and Ukpere (2020) note that inadequate funding and poor infrastructure weaken the productivity gains of educational investment. When agricultural education integrates technical and entrepreneurial skills, it enhances human capital capable of driving enterprise creation, employment, and rural development (World Bank, 2021). The theory also justifies public investment in entrepreneurship-oriented agricultural education due to its private and social benefits, as it improves individual income and self-reliance (Adeyemi & Uko, 2018; Ogunleye & Fadeyi, 2021) while also contributing to agricultural growth, job creation, and rural transformation (FAO, 2018; Thornton, Ribeiro-Soriano, & Urbano, 2011).

The Experiential Learning Theory, developed by Kolb (1984), explains learning as a cyclical process involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation, while Dewey (1938) similarly emphasised that meaningful learning emerges from engagement with real-life problems rather than abstract instruction. In agricultural education, the theory underscores the importance of practical and field-based learning, since agricultural knowledge and entrepreneurial skills cannot be fully developed through classroom teaching alone but require direct engagement with farming activities, markets, and agribusiness processes (Wingenbach & Kahler, 2017). It also supports the development of entrepreneurial competencies such as risk-taking, opportunity recognition, and enterprise management through real-world practice, as argued by Gibb (2002) and Drucker (1985). Accordingly, entrepreneurship-oriented agricultural education should include farm placements, student enterprise projects, market exposure, business planning, and community-based agricultural activities that allow learners to apply theory in practice (Lans, Blok, & Wesselink, 2014; Garton & Chung, 2018), with evidence showing that such experiential

approaches enhance competence, confidence, and entrepreneurial readiness among graduates (Olaitan & Ali, 2019).

Methodology

This position paper adopts a documentary and descriptive research design. It is not based on primary data but relies on systematic review and critical analysis of existing literature, in line with Olaitan and Ali (2019). The study draws on peer-reviewed journal articles, textbooks, government policy documents such as the National Policy on Education and agricultural development plans, as well as reports from organisations including the FAO, World Bank, and UNESCO.

The analysis combines content analysis and critical review (Eze & Ukpere, 2020; Ihejirika & Agwu, 2022), where content analysis is used to identify key themes and findings across relevant literature, while critical review evaluates the quality, relevance, and consistency of the evidence. This includes comparing viewpoints, identifying gaps and contradictions, and synthesising insights into a coherent argument. All materials were selected based on relevance, academic credibility, and currency to ensure the validity of the discussion.

Discussion

The Need for Entrepreneurship-Oriented Agricultural Education

The economic realities of contemporary Nigeria make the reorientation of agricultural education toward entrepreneurship urgently necessary. Nigeria faces rapid population growth and a severe unemployment crisis, with youth and graduate unemployment remaining particularly high, while formal sector jobs continue to shrink, making self-employment and enterprise creation essential for economic survival as noted by the National Bureau of Statistics (2022) and the World Bank (2021). Agricultural education is strategically important in this context because agriculture employs a large proportion of the population and offers wide entrepreneurial opportunities across its value chain, yet these remain underdeveloped due to a shortage of entrepreneurially skilled graduates (FAO, 2018; World Bank, 2021). Mgbeke and Nwofor (2022) and Lans, Blok, and Wesselink (2014) similarly argue that strengthening entrepreneurial competencies in agricultural graduates is critical for

transforming the sector and reducing rural poverty. From a human capital perspective, Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964) emphasize that education must build economically relevant skills to enhance productivity, while Kolb (1984) highlights experiential learning as essential for linking knowledge to practical economic application, making entrepreneurship-oriented agricultural education a necessary pathway for improving graduate productivity and national development.

Agricultural Entrepreneurship as a Pathway to Self-Reliance

Agricultural entrepreneurship provides a practical pathway to self-reliance for Nigerian graduates because it allows entry into income-generating activities with relatively low initial capital compared to many other sectors, as a small plot of land and basic inputs can support viable production. Adeyemi and Uko (2018) found that entrepreneurship education graduates engaged in agriculture began to earn significant household income within 18 months of graduation, showing how quickly agricultural ventures can become productive. The income potential is also considerable, with NISER (2020) reporting that small and medium agribusinesses such as poultry, fish farming, and agro-processing can yield earnings above the minimum wage, while Ogunleye and Fadeyi (2021) observed that self-employed agricultural graduates earned about 1.8 times more than those in formal employment, supporting Timmons and Spinelli (2004) on entrepreneurship as a strong income generator. Beyond individual benefits, agricultural entrepreneurship stimulates rural development by creating jobs across value chains, with Thornton, Ribeiro-Soriano, and Urbano (2011) and FAO (2018) noting its strong multiplier effects, while UNESCO (2019) frames it as a driver of broader sustainable economic development.

Areas of Agricultural Entrepreneurship

The scope of agricultural entrepreneurship is broad and covers production, processing, input supply, and services across the agricultural value chain. Poultry farming is one of the most accessible options due to its short production cycle, strong local demand, and relatively low entry cost, making it suitable for broilers, layers, and day-old chick production when properly managed. Fish farming, especially catfish and tilapia production in ponds or tanks, also offers strong opportunities because domestic demand exceeds supply and small land areas can be used effectively. Crop production and processing provide further opportunities in crops such as cassava, rice, yam,

vegetables, and oil palm, where value addition through milling, flour production, or packaging increases profitability. Agro-processing is particularly significant because converting raw produce into finished food products such as oil, flour, or packaged foods generates higher margins and meets growing market demand. Farm input supply and agricultural services, including fertilisers, seeds, mechanisation services, irrigation support, and pest control, also present viable entrepreneurial niches as modern farming expands. In addition, organic agriculture and niche markets such as free-range poultry, honey production, and medicinal plants are emerging opportunities driven by increasing demand for healthier and sustainably produced food products in urban markets.

Role of Government and Educational Institutions

The transformation of agricultural education toward entrepreneurship requires coordinated action by government and educational institutions. Curriculum reform led by the Federal Ministry of Education, NERDC, and NUC should embed entrepreneurship and agribusiness content across all levels of agricultural training rather than treating it as an isolated course. Government must also improve funding for agricultural education to upgrade farms, laboratories, and training centres, since practical infrastructure is essential for experiential learning. In addition, financial support systems such as grants, loans, and incubation programmes need to be strengthened and better targeted at agricultural graduates, building on schemes like ACGSF, the CBN Anchor Borrowers Programme, and YouWIN, which have suffered from weak implementation. Finally, strong school–industry partnerships with agribusiness firms and cooperatives are necessary to provide students with practical exposure, mentorship, and access to real market environments that support successful enterprise development after graduation.

Challenges to Effective Entrepreneurship-Oriented Agriculture Education

Notwithstanding the compelling case for entrepreneurship-oriented agricultural education, a number of significant challenges must be acknowledged and addressed in order to ensure that the proposed reforms are implemented effectively and sustainably.

Poor infrastructure remains the most immediate and visible challenge. The physical condition of agricultural education facilities in Nigeria is, in many institutions, deplorable. Teaching farms are understocked, laboratories are poorly equipped, and processing facilities are non-existent or dysfunctional. Without substantial investment in physical infrastructure, entrepreneurship-oriented agricultural education will remain an aspiration rather than a reality, because the hands-on practical training that is central to this approach requires well-equipped and well-maintained educational facilities.

Inadequate practical exposure is a related but distinct challenge. Even in institutions that possess reasonable physical resources, the culture of agricultural education has historically been more classroom-oriented than field-oriented. Students spend the majority of their educational time in lectures, seminars, and examinations, with relatively limited time devoted to actual farming, processing, or agribusiness activities. Changing this culture requires not only physical investment but a fundamental transformation in pedagogical philosophy, institutional norms, and assessment practices.

Insufficient and unreliable funding is a systemic challenge that constrains the capacity of educational institutions to deliver quality agricultural education at any level, let alone the enriched, entrepreneurially oriented version proposed in this paper. The persistent underfunding of Nigerian educational institutions by government, combined with the high cost of providing practical agricultural training, means that without a significant and sustained increase in educational investment, the proposed reforms will lack the financial foundation needed for successful implementation.

Policy inconsistency and weak governance represent structural challenges that have repeatedly derailed educational reform initiatives in Nigeria. A succession of well-intentioned policy documents and reform programmes in the areas of agricultural education and entrepreneurship education have failed to achieve their stated objectives because of weak implementation machinery, frequent changes in policy direction, inadequate monitoring and evaluation, and poor coordination between relevant government ministries and agencies. Addressing these governance challenges is as important as designing good policies.

The lack of motivation among students, driven in part by the cultural devaluation of agriculture and in part by genuine concerns about the income and career prospects of agricultural entrepreneurship, is a challenge that

requires sustained attention from educators, policymakers, and community leaders. Changing the cultural perception of agriculture requires a comprehensive and long-term public awareness campaign that showcases the success stories of young agricultural entrepreneurs, demonstrates the economic potential of modern agribusiness, and challenges the entrenched association of agricultural work with poverty and social inferiority.

Suggestions

On the basis of the foregoing analysis, this paper makes the following recommendations to educational policymakers, agricultural education institutions, government agencies, and other relevant stakeholders.

- I. Comprehensive curriculum reform should be undertaken at all levels of agricultural education to integrate entrepreneurship principles, agribusiness management, value chain analysis, marketing, financial planning, and enterprise development throughout the agricultural curriculum. This reform must be systematic, comprehensive, and supported by adequate teacher training and curriculum development resources.
- II. Practical and field-based training must be substantially strengthened by increasing the proportion of the agricultural education curriculum devoted to hands-on farm work, agribusiness placements, processing and value addition activities, and student enterprise projects. Institutions should adopt a minimum ratio of practical to theoretical instruction that ensures every agricultural education graduate has meaningful real-world agricultural and business experience before graduation.
- III. Government at federal and state levels must make significant and sustained increases in budgetary allocations to agricultural education institutions, with specific provisions for the rehabilitation of teaching farms, the procurement of modern farm equipment and laboratory instruments, and the establishment of agribusiness training and incubation centres.
- IV. Formal and structured partnerships between agricultural education institutions and agribusiness enterprises, cooperative societies, food

processing companies, and agricultural commodity boards must be established and actively managed. These partnerships should provide students with internship placements, mentorship programmes, and post-graduation enterprise support.

- V. Regular entrepreneurship seminars, workshops, and business development bootcamps should be organised for agricultural education students, featuring successful young agricultural entrepreneurs as role models, mentors, and resource persons. These activities should be formally integrated into the curriculum rather than treated as optional extracurricular activities.
- VI. A dedicated agricultural graduate entrepreneurship support fund should be established, providing accessible start-up grants, low-interest loans, and business development services to agricultural education graduates who wish to establish agribusiness enterprises. This fund should be administered transparently and evaluated regularly to ensure its effectiveness.
- VII. Agricultural education institutions should actively recruit and develop teachers with practical agribusiness experience, and should provide regular in-service training and industry exposure opportunities to existing instructors, ensuring that the teaching workforce is equipped to deliver entrepreneurship-oriented agricultural education effectively.
- VIII. National and community-level awareness campaigns should be developed and implemented to change societal perceptions of agriculture, highlight the economic potential of agricultural entrepreneurship, and celebrate the achievements of young agricultural entrepreneurs as inspiring examples for the next generation.

Conclusion

This position paper has shown, through a review of conceptual, theoretical, and empirical literature, that strengthening self-reliance among Nigerian agricultural education graduates depends on reorienting agricultural education toward entrepreneurship. The current system is largely theoretical, with weak practical training, limited entrepreneurial content, and poor linkage to the agribusiness sector, resulting in graduates who are often ill-prepared for economic self-sufficiency. Insights from Human Capital Theory and

Experiential Learning Theory, along with evidence from vocational and technical education literature, consistently support the view that integrating entrepreneurship into agricultural education enhances productivity and employability. While challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, funding constraints, policy inconsistency, and cultural bias against agriculture remain significant, they are not insurmountable with sustained reform and investment. A deliberate shift toward entrepreneurship-oriented agricultural education is therefore essential for producing graduates who can create jobs rather than depend on them, contributing to poverty reduction and national development in Nigeria.

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