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Farm Practical Training and Job Aspiration of Undergraduates of Agriculture in Universities in Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated whether farm practical training (FPT) is significantly associated with job aspiration of undergraduate students comparing results of empirical evidence between two Universities in Kwara State, Nigeria. Specifically, students preferred courses of study were identified, and their attitude towards FPT and job aspiration were determined. One hundred and twenty final year students who recently completed the FPT were selected from the two universities through multistage sampling. The average age of students was 23.5 years with standard deviation of 2.4. Less than half (40%) preferred agriculture as course of study, while 38% preferred science and 5% medicine. About 32% decided to remain in agriculture after admission because it is deemed prestigious, while 13% considered it last available opportunity to gain admission and 17% due to its entrepreneurial potentials. Many (69.8%) aspired for agriculture/farming related job, while 12% aspired to work in agro-allied industries. Many (45.8%) had favorable attitude towards the FPT, comprising 35.0% UNILORIN and 10.8% KWASU students. However, more (23.3%) of KWASU students had unfavorable attitude towards FPT compared to 5% UNILORIN students in this category. There was no significant association between students' attitude towards FPT and their job aspiration in both UNILORIN (χ^2=8.07, p=0.62) and KWASU (χ^2=8.60 p=0.38). Although, most of the

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students aspired to work in agriculture/agro-allied industry, it was however concluded, from the empirical findings, that FPT did not significantly influence their job aspiration.

Keywords: Attitude towards agriculture, job aspiration, occupational prestige.

Introduction

Agriculture is a practical oriented profession. In realization of this fact and in a bid to produce graduates of agriculture who will have requisite skills to practice the profession upon graduation, the National University Commission, in 1981, restructured the curriculum of agriculture at undergraduate level by introducing internship programme, otherwise known as Farm Practical Training (FPT) for agriculture students. The new curriculum makes FPT mandatory for agriculture undergraduates in the fourth year of the five-year degree programme leading to the award of B. Agriculture Degree. All Nigerian universities offering agriculture had hitherto awarded B.Sc. Agric. degree which ran for four-year duration. The B. Agriculture Degree programme thus allows for one additional academic session dedicated to practical training and designed to improve the competence of the students. The FPT aims to complement theoretical classroom teaching with practical learning, improve the technical know-how of the nation's university graduates of agriculture and enhance youth retention in agriculture (Ayanda, Yusuf and Salawu, 2013; Oloruntoba, 2008; Omolaja, 2001).

Williams (1978) defines training as the process of applying appropriate educational methodology to those situations in which improved performance can result in effective learning. Ogunbameru (1986) describes internship as the process of gaining knowledge and practical skill through observation and by doing. Bernandin (2003) defines training as any attempt to improve employee performance on a currently held job or one related to it. In relation to agriculture, Ajayi *et al.* (2008) regard training as the acquisition of knowledge, skills and required attitude or behavioural change, which if applied to a specific job situation results in better performance in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and quality output. In essence, through partaking in farm practical training graduates of agriculture, ordinarily, are expected not only to have acquired requisite skills and knowledge to practice the profession on their one with few external assistance, but also to have developed favorable attitude and positive mindset about the agriculture profession.

Earlier studies (Omolaja, 2001; Ajayi *et al*., 2008; Oloruntoba, 2008; Ayanda *et al,* 2013) focused on students of a single institution participating in the FPT or internship programme. This study, however, is comparing two universities in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study was to investigate whether FPT is significantly associated with job aspiration of undergraduate students.

Specific objectives were to:

i. identify students preferred courses of study;
ii. determine their attitude towards FPT; and
iii. examine students' job aspiration.

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Hypotheses of the Study

H_{o1}: There was no significant association between attitudes towards FPT and job aspiration of students in both institutions.
H_{o2}: There was no significant difference between attitudes towards FPT among students of both institutions.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Kwara State Nigeria, with focus on students of university of Ilorin and Kwara state university. The faculty of agriculture in university of Ilorin has five distinct programmes, namely agronomy, crop production, animal production, agricultural economics & farm management and agricultural extension & rural Development. KWASU, on the other hand, has three programmes in its College of Agriculture, namely, animal production, crop production and agricultural economics and extension. UNILORIN, established about 4 decades ago had had its FPT running for three and half decades now. KWASU, however, established about 8 years ago currently has 5th set of students participating in the FPT. With KWASU agriculture degree programme having received full accreditation status from the NUC regulatory body in 2014, it is assumed that difference in years of establishment of both Universities and duration of their FPT programmes would not unduly affect the study outcome.
All 500 level students in both institutions constitute the population of the study. There were total of 213 students in UNILORIN with 63, 45 and 41 students in animal science, agricultural extension and agricultural economics departments, respectively, while agronomy and crop science had 34 and 33 students, respectively. KWASU, on the other hand had 61 students with 22 and 18 students in crop production and animal production, respectively, while agricultural economics and extension services department had 21 students.

A multistage sampling procedure was used to select respondents. Firstly, 50% of respondent was targeted for selection in both institutions to ensure equal representation of students (i.e. with final sample comprising 50% UNILORIN and KWASU students). At second stage, all 61 final year students from KWASU were purposively selected while for UNILORIN, 30% of the total number of students in each of the departments were randomly selected giving 64 students. A total of 120 copies of the questionnaire duly filled by students of both institutions were used for data in December, 2016. Variables such as sex, position in the family, preferred course of study, reason for preference and job aspiration were measured at nominal level. Other variables including age, years of education, etc., were measured at ratio level. Students' attitude towards FPT was measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Response options of 'strongly agreed', 'agreed', 'undecided', 'disagreed' and 'strongly disagreed' scored 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively for positively worded statements, and vice-versa (i.e. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) for negatively worded statements. Weighted mean score was then calculated for each statement. WMS below 3 was regarded as unfavorable disposition of the respondents towards any such statement. Total score of 'attitude towards FPT' was obtained by adding response scores of each respondent per statement. Then, using mean plus or minus standard error, respondents were categorized into three groups; namely, 'those with favorable disposition to FPT', 'those unfavorably disposed to FPT' and 'those with indifferent

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disposition'. Data collected were summarized using frequency, percentage, mean, chi-square and one-way analysis of variance.

Results and Discussion

Students' Personal Characteristics

Table 1 show that slightly above half (56.7%) of the students were male. UNILORIN had fewer (18.3%) female students, KWASU had equal number of female students as male (i.e. 25%). The overall result indicate that more male students were admitted to study agriculture. Although, this submission concurs with the findings of Oloruntoba (2008) where male majority were reported to be studying agriculture, it is, however, in contrast with that of Ayanda, Yusuf and Salawu (2013) which reported that more female students were admitted to study agriculture in their study in Kwara state. The mean age of the students was 23.51 years with standard deviation of 2.37. UNILORIN students had mean age of 23.75 years while in KWASU it was 23.27 years with standard deviation of 2.09 and 2.62, respectively.

Table 1: Socioeconomic characteristics of students

Variable/Institution	UNILORIN (n=60)	KWASU (n=60)	Total (n=120)
Gender			
Male	31.7	25.0	56.7
Female	18.3	25.0	43.3
Age (years)			
≤18	0.0	1.7	0.0
19-23	21.7	25.8	47.5
24-28	27.5	20.0	47.5
≥28	0.8	2.5	3.3
Mean	23.75	23.29	23.51
Std. dev.	2.09	2.62	2.39
Department			
Animal production	15.8	14.2	30.0
Crop production	8.3	16.7	25.0
Agronomy	8.3	0.0	8.3
Agric. Economics	5.0	0.0	5.0
Agric. Extension	12.5	0.0	12.5
Agric. Ext. & Econs.	0.0	19.2	19.2
Position in the Family			
1st	8.3	10.0	18.3
2nd	7.5	5.8	13.3
3rd	17.7	15.8	32.5
4th	7.5	18.3	25.8
5th	8.3	0.0	8.3
6th	1.7	0.0	1.7

Source: Field survey, 2016

Table 1 further show that 30% and 25% of the respondents were students of animal production and crop production, respectively. About 19% were in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension in KWASU while 12.5% and 5% of the students were in agricultural extension and agricultural economics departments, respectively, in UNILORIN.

Students' birth position in their family shows that highest percentage (32.5%) occupied 3rd position, followed by 4th position (25.8%). The result indicates that a sizeable number amongst the respondents had older ones within the family whom

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they may tend to look up to. This may have implication on their career choice and future job aspirations, because family members, parents in particular, as noted by Jeffery *et al.*'s (2004), play a significant role in career aspirations and career goal development of their children.

Students Preferred Course

Table 2 shows that 40% of the students indicated preference for agriculture, with almost equal proportion from UNILORIN and KWASU (i.e. 20.8% and 19.2%, respectively). About 38.3% indicated preference for science, comprising 19.2% each from both institutions. Few (less than 10%) indicated preference for engineering, pharmacy and medicine, respectively across the two institutions. The results show that agriculture and other science related disciplines ranked highest amongst courses of study desired by students. The finding is in contrast to that of Ajayi *et al.* (2008) and Ayanda *et al*. (2013) where most students of agriculture, *ab initio*, had preference for 'prestigious courses' like medicine and pharmacy. This may be attributed to two reasons. First, increasing effort of the government in recent past emphasizing and encouraging agriculture may have subtly influenced students' career choice. Secondly, the seemingly prestigious courses might be losing credibility now, even as most graduates of these courses face serious difficulty in getting placement for their one-year post graduation internship, with future job prospects ever bleaker.

The majority of the students (76.7%) did not attempt to change their course of study after 100 level. Out of the 23.3% who attempted changing, 12.5% were UNILORIN students and 10.8% KWASU students. Also, the majority of the students (98.3%) indicated they were no more interested in changing their courses even if allowed to do so now. This could be due to the fact those who wanted to leave (i.e. 23.3%) and others who never attempted leaving might have already developed interest in agriculture which may not be unconnected to knowledge and skills acquired during participation in the FPT programme.

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Table 2: Preferred course of study

Preferred course of Study	UNILORIN (n=60)	KWASU (n=60)	Total (n=120)
Agriculture	20.8	19.2	40.0
Science	19.2	19.2	38.4
Medicine	2.5	2.5	5.0
Engineering	5.0	1.7	6.7
Pharmacy	1.7	3.3	5.0
Others	0.8	4.2	5.0
Attempt to change course after 100Level			
Yes	12.5	10.8	23.3
No	37.5	39.2	76.7
Still desire to change course if given opportunity			
Yes	0.8	0.8	1.7
No	49.2	49.2	98.3
Reasons for decision to stay in agriculture			
It is prestigious	8.3	23.3	31.7
My personal ambition	19.2	5.8	25.0
Those who studied agriculture are well to do in the society	2.5	5.8	8.3
Last available opportunity to gain admission	5.0	8.3	13.3
Parental influence	4.2	0.8	5.0
It offers lot of entrepreneurial opportunities	10.8	5.8	16.7

Source: Field survey, 2016

Furthermore, results in Table 2 show that 31.7% of the students decided to stay on in agriculture because they considered it prestigious profession; of this, KWASU students were 23.3%. Another 25.0% indicated agriculture as a profession had always been their personal ambition, of which 19.2% were UNILORIN students. Also, 16.7% indicated they stayed on in agriculture because they believed it offers a lot of entrepreneurial opportunities, comprising 10.8% and 5.8% UNILORIN and KWASU students, respectively. While few (13.3%) were studying agriculture because that was the last opportunity they had to gain admission into the University, very few (5.0%) indicated parental influence as reason to study agriculture. These results indicate that students' decision to study agriculture was not due to external influence, rather they willfully decide to stay on studying agriculture for reasons mentioned above.

Students' Attitude Towards FPT

Results in Table 3 show that students believed that the Bachelors of Agriculture programme is not complete without the Farm Practical Training component with weighted mean score of 4.72 and 4.63 for UNILORIN and KWASU students, respectively. Also, students were of the opinion that FPT programme helped them develop favourable attitude towards studying agriculture with WMS of 4.28 for UNILORIN and 4.45 for KWASU students. In the same vein, the students did not concur with the idea that 'FPT did not impart new agricultural skills on them'. The statement recorded WMS of 4.21 and 4.51 for UNILORIN and KWASU, respectively.

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These results, perhaps, indicate that the students had favorable disposition towards the FPT programme in both institutions. This could be as a result of exposure to practical experiences and new skill learnt during the FPT that enabled them to develop positive frame of mind and appreciate the profitability of agriculture as a business venture.

Results further show that students supported the position that FPT programme enabled them have a change of mind about the job they had always aspired before the training, with WMS of 4.32 and 4.58 for UNILORIN and KWASU students, respectively. This could mean that, those amongst them who might have been aspiring for white collar jobs have now decided to have their own farm business as a result of the training. This perhaps, might be an indication that FPT influenced students' job aspiration positively.

Table 3: Attitude of Students towards farm practical training

Statement/Institution	UNILORIN WMS	KWASU WMS
B. Agriculture programme is incomplete without FPT (+ve)	4.72	4.63
FPT programme helps students develop favourable attitude towards studying agriculture (+ve)	4.28	4.45
FPT does not impact new agricultural skills on students (-ve)	4.21	4.51
FPT programme influenced me to have change of mind about the job I'd always aspired before the training (+ve)	4.32	4.58
Skills acquired during the FPT is not sufficient to make students establish their own farm after graduation (-ve)	4.00	3.00
The training impacts on students enough entrepreneurial skills to enable them manage a farm on their own in future (+ve)	4.61	3.80
FPT is a mere waste of financial resources (-ve)	4.63	4.50
FPT programme is a mere waste of time (-ve)	4.25	4.40
FPT programme should not be scrapped (+ve)	4.00	4.25
The training is adequately funded (+ve)	4.33	2.33
Materials available on the teaching and research farm are not functional (-ve)	4.23	2.71
Materials available for use are not adequate (-ve)	4.20	2.30

Source: Field survey, 2016

The students disagreed with the opinion that 'skills acquired during the FPT is not sufficient to make students establish their own farm after graduation' with WMS of 4.00 and 3.00 for UNILORIN and KWASU students, respectively. This is an

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indication that students believed they had learnt necessary and sufficient skills to enable them start up on their own after finishing in school. This is corroborated by further results which reflected that students believed the FPT had imparted on them enough entrepreneurial skills necessary to enable them manage a farm on their own in future. UNILORIN and KWASU students had WMS of 4.61 and 3.80, respectively, for this statement.

Likewise, results show that students did not concur with the position that FPT was a 'mere waste of financial resources' with UNILORIN and KWASU students having WMS of 4.63 and 4.50, respectively. Similarly, the students did not also agree that 'FPT programme was a mere waste of time'. UNILORIN and KWASU students had WMS of 4.25 and 4.40 respectively, on this statement. They equally did not subscribe to the idea that 'the progrmme should be scrapped' with WMS of 4.00 and 4.25 for UNILORIN and KWASU students, respectively. These results could mean that students acknowledged that the financial commitments of their institution to the programme as worthwhile and necessary; and that they also valued the period during which they went through the training as worthwhile, as they didn't regard it as mere waste of their time and would not want the programme brought to an end.

UNILORIN students, with WMS of 4.33, supported the position that 'the training was adequately funded' while KWASU students did agree so, with WMS of 2.33. Also, while UNILORIN students mostly disagreed that 'materials available on the teaching and research farm were not functional' (WMS = 4.23), KWASU students mostly agreed so (WMS = 2.71). Similarly, while UNILORIN students mostly did not concur with the statement 'materials available for use for the FPT were not adequate' (WMS = 4.20), KWASU students mostly concurred so (WMS = 2.30). These results are an indication of inadequate funding of the FPT, with non-functional and inadequate materials used for the FPT in KWASU compared to UNILORIN. This finding was similar to submission of Ayanda *et al*. (2013) who reported that as much as three-quarter of students involved in their study held that materials available for the FPT in KWASU were not adequate. This may not be unconnected with the fact the premises currently being used as teaching and research farm in KWASU is a temporary property acquired for use by the university from the state government. This is due to the fact that the KWASU campus for college of agriculture, which should house a befitting T and R farm is meant to be located and constructed in another location, Ilesha-Baruba, Baruten Local Government Area of the state. The college is currently in Malete campus of the University. As such, the financial commitment of the University may not be holistic pending relocation of the college of agriculture to its anticipated campus.

Results in Figure 1 show that many (45.8%) of the students had favorable attitude towards FPT, composed of 35% UNILORIN and 10.8% KWASU students. More (23.3%) KWASU students had unfavorable attitude towards the FPT compared to 5% UNILORIN student in this category. These results indicate that UNILORIN students had better disposition to the FPT than KWASU students. This may not be unconnected to issues such as inadequate funding of the FPT, non-functional and inadequate materials associated with the FPT in KWASU as already identified. There is need for the university to provide adequate funding and more functional materials

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for students during the FPT even before final relocation to the college's permanent site. The finding also underscores the need for the University to build well equipped and functional Teaching and Research Farm at the permanent site.

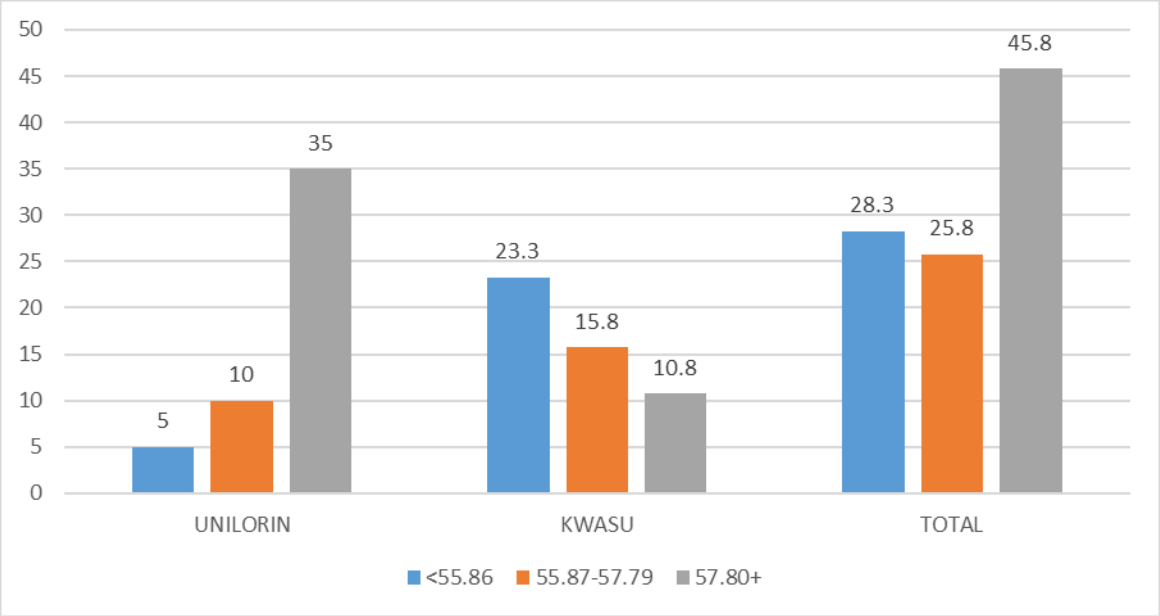


Fig. 1: Percentage distribution of students based on attitudes towards FPT
Source: Field survey, 2016

Table 4: Students' job aspiration

Job	UNILORIN	KWASU	TOTAL
Agriculture/Farming	34.0	35.3	69.8
Agro-allied industry	6.0	6.0	12.0
Civil service	5.2	4.3	9.5
Banking	1.7	0.8	2.5
IT sector	0.8	1.7	2.5

Source: Field survey, 2016

Results in Table 4 show that the majority (69.8%) aspired to go into the field of agriculture/farming, comprising 34% and 35.3% UNILORIN and KWASU students, respectively. Another 12% aspired to work in agro-allied industry, composed of students of both institutions in equal proportion. Others opted to work in the civil service (9.5%), banking industry (2.5%) and IT sector (2.5%). The results indicate the majority of the students in both UNILORIN and KWASU aspired for agriculture and related profession after graduation.

Association between Students' Job Aspiration and Attitudes
Table 5 shows that there was no significant association between job aspiration of students in both institutions and their attitude towards FPT (UNILORIN χ^2=8.07; KWASU χ^2=8.60. P≥0.05)

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Table 5: Association between students' job aspiration and attitudes towards FPT

Variable	X^2
Job aspiration-FPT	UNILORIN=8.069*
	KWASU = 8.599*

*P≥0.05. Source: Field survey, 2016

. This indicates that despite most of the students aspiring to work in agriculture/agro-allied industry, it could not be concluded from the findings of the studies that FPT did significantly influence their job aspiration. This is similar to the findings of Ajayi *et al*. (2008) that internship training aroused students' interest in participating in FPT, it however did not significantly impact on internee's job aspiration. The findings underscore the need for further overhauling of the farm practical training programme with focus on impacting of students' job aspiration.

Difference in Students' Attitude Towards FPT

Table 6 indicates presence of significance difference (F= 31.21, p≤0.05) in attitudes towards FPT amongst students of both institutions. With higher mean value recorded in favour of UNILORIN students, this finding perhaps empirically confirm the earlier submission that UNILORIN students had better disposition to the FPT compared to their counterpart from KWASU. This may be linked to the presence of better facilities in UNILORIN. It may also be due to the fact the institution, having being undertaking the farm practical training for over 3 decades, would have acquired better experience of implementation.

Table 6: Difference in students' attitude towards FPT

Variable/summary statistics	UNILORIN	KWASU	F
Attitude towards FPT			
Mean	59.23	54.25	31.21*
Standard deviation	3.63	5.80	
Standard error	0.27	0.77	

*P≤0.05. Source: Field survey, 2016

Conclusion and Recommendation

Agriculture and other science related disciplines ranked highest amongst course of study students preferred. Students' decision to study agriculture was not due to parental influence, rather they willfully decided to study agriculture for such reasons

as 'personal ambition', 'entrepreneurial opportunities in agriculture'. Although, most of the students aspired to work within the field of agriculture and agro-allied industry, FPT was not found to influence students' job aspiration amongst students of both institutions. Furthermore, there was inadequate funding of the FPT, with non-functional and inadequate materials used for the FPT in KWASU compared to UNILORIN.

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There is need for Kwara State University to provide more funding, adequate and functional materials for students' learning during the FPT, even before final relocation to the college's permanent site. The study also recommends further overhauling of the farm practical training programme by each University's management so as to ensure the FPT influences students' job aspiration.

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