Expanding the Teaching of Vocational Agriculture in Sierra Leone Schools: Important Questions and Observations

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Abstract
Agriculture is a major pillar of development in Sierra Leone. Although, “three out of four people work in agriculture …, they produce less food per capita today than they did before the green revolution.” (Blum, 1996) This has resulted in hunger and malnutrition which causes widespread human suffering today. Agricultural Education, therefore, plays a significant role in human resource development, and practical agriculture has become the centerpiece. Students’ appreciation for practical agriculture was recorded as favorable by Kargbo and Mansaray (2000) in their analysis of teaching practical agriculture in the University of Sierra Leone.

Following the devastating effect of the civil war, there is evidence of decline in production enterprises in schools. Pertaining to the production enterprises in many schools, this leaves many questions to be answered. Important among these include: What types of production enterprises are in the schools? What is the economic value of these enterprises? What is the level of students’ participation? Would it be possible to adopt vocational agriculture alongside college-based Agricultural Education programs, i.e. “articulated” approach?

The questions were stimulated by the observation that: Some schools do have enough land for the establishment of agricultural production enterprises; Some schools do not have tools and equipment, finance, and the requisite human resource for undertaking agricultural production enterprises. If such a study is conducted, the findings could be very useful for planning and implementing future Agricultural Education programs and institutions in Sierra Leone. The poster presentation would explore the important questions, barriers, actors, and opportunities related to such an investigation and report on preliminary research proposal development for that purpose.

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