Participatory Approach to Secondary Agricultural Education Program Improvement: A SWOT Analysis of Secondary Agriculture Program in Trinidad

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**Introduction** The Islands of Trinidad & Tobago occupy an area 5,128 sq km between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, northeast of Venezuela, with a population of 1,088,644 (World Factbook, 2005). With an economy largely dependent on energy (oil) extraction, an agriculture sector that now accounts for only 2.7 % of GDP, coupled with a youth population that is largely averse to agriculture, secondary agricultural education programs on the Islands face an uncertain future. In the fall of 2004, the Trinidad branch of the AIAEE organized a workshop for secondary agricultural teachers on the Island of Trinidad titled “Issues and Challenges in Integrating Instructional Technology into Secondary Agricultural Curriculum”. At the conclusion of the presentation, participants who numbered over 75 were taken through a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat) analysis exercise to identify major issues and challenges in improving secondary agricultural curriculum in Trinidad. Visits were also conducted to three secondary agricultural programs on the Island.

**Method** The SWOT analysis approach which emerged out of business school strategic planning tradition, seeks to address the question of strategy formation from a two-fold perspective of environmental (exogenous) analysis of threats and opportunities and an internal or endogenous assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses (Karppi, Kokkonen & Läähteenmäki-Smith, 2001). Using a qualitative, open-ended question format, individual teachers were requested to identify internal strengths and weaknesses and external threats and opportunities impacting secondary agricultural education on the Island. Teachers were then assigned into teams to develop team consensus on the factors identified. Each team also had an opportunity to present their findings and conclusion to the whole group. The data collected during the session was analyzed using the Data collection, Data reduction, Data display and Conclusion drawing and Verifying model developed by Miles & Huberman (M & H) (1984).

**Major Points or Information to be Shared** Using a role-play presentation approach, participants in the proposed Carousel session will be organized into Strategic Planning Teams and charged with the task of devising program improvement recommendations for Trinidad’s secondary agricultural education programs based on the SWOT analysis data to be presented during the session.

**Educational Importance** This proposed carousel presentation will make a contribution by providing participants with a hands-on experience in using the SWOT analysis as a tool for conducting participatory program assessment and improvement. It is hoped that participants will be able to apply the skill learned during the session, in other program improvement contexts on their jobs.