# Assessing Agricultural Students' Attitude towards Farm Practical Training in Some Selected Universities in Kwara State, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

*Farm practical training is a skill training programme designed to expose and enhance the capabilities of agricultural students to make them professionals and self – reliant. The study assessed the attitude of agricultural students to farm practical training (FPT) in selected universities in Kwara state. The study specifically identified the personal characteristics of the students; identified the constraints faced by the students during the FPT; assessed the students level of satisfaction with the FPT; and examined the attitude of the students towards FPT. Three universities (University of Ilorin, Kwara state university and Landmark University) were purposively selected due to their involvement in FPT. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 50 respondents from each of the universities with the aid of a well – structured questionnaire. A total of 150 students were sampled. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Results of the findings showed that the major constraints faced by the students during FPT were inadequate vehicle for conveying students to and from demonstration farms, and uncertainty in weather conditions with mean scores of 3.62, 3.52 and 2.76 for KWASU, Landmark University, and University of Ilorin respectively. The study also revealed that the majority of the students had a favourable attitude towards FPT with attitudinal index of 0.70(70%), 0.74(74%) and 0.72(72%) for University of Ilorin, KWASU and Landmark University respectively. The study conclude that the agricultural students had a positive attitude towards FPT. Amongst others, it is recommended that the universities managements should try to provide the students and staff with vehicles for conveying them to and from the demonstration farms.*

**Key words:** farm practical training; attitude; kwara state; agricultural students; universities

## INTRODUCTION

The students industrial work experience scheme (SIWES) for agricultural students is regarded as farm practical training (FPT). Farm practical training is a skill training programme designed to prepare and expose agricultural science students to practices capable of making them professionals and self – reliant.

In Nigeria today, the students' industrial work experience scheme is an integral part of some degrees and diploma programme in institutions of higher learning that closes the gap between what is thought in the classroom and what is obtainable in the real – life work experience (KSU, 2020), availing the students opportunities to transmit their theoretical knowledge to practice through practical training programmes (Rodzalan and Saat, 2012). Tertiary institutions are especially tasked with producing extremely proficient human resources to attain national economic development goals in their various sectors and sub-sectors (Mojarradi and Karamidehkordi, 2016).

The farm practical training must be well embedded in the training curricula of universities and must be in line with the NUC Minimum Academic Standards introduced in the late 1980's that specified the need for Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) for degree programme in agriculture, forestry and other disciplines (Olawoye, 2006). According to Saliu, *et al*. (2016), practical farming has a lot to do with the kinds of skills and entrepreneurial knowledge acquired that may be used in real-life situations. Reece and Walker (2016) viewed practical training as capacity building processes for students whose learning abilities are better enhanced through direct or practical experiences such as observation, learning experience are fundamental for students in area of agriculture. The students are made to do practical's of the theories thought to them in the class rooms, and they become perfect (professionals) while practicing. Ayanda *et al*. (2013), opined that the inclusion of farm practical training in agricultural curricula has helped address lots of shortcomings ranging from unskilled graduates to inexperienced laborers, as the acquisition of practical skills has broadened graduates' skills in agriculture.

In Nigeria presently most of the graduate of agriculture who are trained to be employers of labours are now job seekers roaming about the streets seeking for white collar jobs. They lack what is required of them to be self – reliant due to little or no exposures of the student to practical training by the universities or due to the students' attitude towards such training programmes.

According Anyanwu and Iloeje (1996) who reported that the proportion of graduates with competent skills in agriculture appears to be less than the share of students enrolled in this discipline. Limitations in the design, content and delivery of the agricultural curriculum form part of the many problems limiting universities' capacity to meet the demands of the agricultural sector, including the skills shortage (Acuña *et al.*, 2014). As Navarro (2006); Bruening and Frick (2004) submitted that companies of today want graduates with cross-cultural experiences.

The timing of the training programme also shapes the attitude of the students towards the farm practical training. If the timing is not properly done, the students tends to develop an unfavourable attitude towards the training as a reflection of lack of seriousness on the side of the institution regarding the programme. According to William (2015), the timing (quantity and quality) allotted for practical training may determine the effectiveness of such training on the trainee. Much time should be allotted for the students during FPT for them to be fully engage in practical and allow them go through all the aspects of the training, the aspects with more work load should be allotted a commensurate amount of time and vice versa.

The broad objective of this study is to assess the attitude of agricultural students towards farm practical training in some selected universities in Kwara State. Specifically, the study sought to; describe the personal characteristics of the students, identify the perceived constraint faced by the students during FPT, investigate the level of satisfaction of the activities involved in FPT by the students, and examine the perceived attitude of the students towards FPT.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in three tertiary institutions located in Kwara state, Nigeria. Kwara state was created on the 27th of May, 1967 with its capital in Ilorin. Kwara state is on latitude $8.9669^0$ N and longitude $4.3874^0$ E.

The three institutions are; University of Ilorin, Ilorin (established in 1975), Kwara state University, Malete (established in 2009) and Landmark University, Omu-Aran (established in 2011). Kwara state is located in the north central geopolitical zone, commonly known as the middle belt. It consists of sixteen local government area.

The study population is all the 500 level B. Agric. students in the study area that undertook FPT in their 400 level. A two stage sampling technique was used to select the respondents. Stage one involve purposive selection of three universities (University of Ilorin, Kwara state University and Landmark University) with faculties of Agriculture, who undertakes SIWES (FPT) training. The second stage involve random selection of 50 students from each of the universities giving a total of 150 respondents for the study.

A structured questionnaire and interview scheduled were used for data collection. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and mean score from likert – type of scale. Descriptive statistics include percentages, mean and frequencies. Students' attitude towards FPT was measured using a 4-point Likert-type scale of 'strongly agreed'= 4, 'agreed'= 3, 'disagreed'= 2 and 'strongly disagreed'= 1 for positively worded statements, and vice-versa (i.e. 1, 2, 3 and 4) for negatively worded statements. Weighted mean score was then calculated for each statement. To calculate the mean score, the nominal values of the scale (1+2+3+4) were summed up to obtain 10. The sum was further divided by 4 to get 2.5 which is the mean. Any variable with a mean score >2.5 was regarded as a positive attitude towards farm practical training, while variable with a mean score <2.5 was regarded as a negative attitude towards farm practical training.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Personal characteristics of the respondents

Table 1 presents the personal characteristics of the respondents.

**Table1: Respondents personal characteristics**

| **Variable/institution** | **Unilorin** | **KWASU** | **Landmark** |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **F**/% | **F**/% | **F**/% |
| **Sex** | | | |
| Male | 21(42) | 26(52) | 33(66) |
| Female | 29(58) | 24(48) | 17(34) |
| **Age** | | | |
| 16-20 | 20(40) | 10(20) | 9(18) |
| 21-25 | 27(54) | 31(62) | 38(72) |
| 26-30 | 3(6) | 9(18) | 5(10) |
| Mean | 21.3 | 22.9 | 22.6 |
| **Accommodation status** | | | |
| Campus | 11(22) | 8(16) | 45(90) |
| Off-campus | 39(78) | 42(84) | 5(10) |
| **Father's occupation** | 3(6) | 8(16) | 4(8) |
| Farming | 10(20) | 8(16) | 8(16) |
| Trading | 22(44) | 15(30) | 33(66) |
| civil service | 15(30) | 19(38) | 5(10) |
| self-employed | | | |
| **Mothers occupation** | 6(12) | 5(10) | 9(18) |
| | 10(20) | 12(24) | 4(8) |
| Farming | 22(44) | 21(42) | 19(38) |
| Trading | 12(24) | 12(24) | 8(16) |
| civil service | | | |
| self-employed | | | |

The sex distribution of the respondents shows that the majority (66%) and (52%) of the respondents in Landmark university and KWASU were male respectively while they were more (58%) female than male in the university of Ilorin. The majority of the respondents were between the ages of 21 – 25 years across the universities with a mean age of 22.3 years.

This is in line with the findings of Oladele *et al*. (2011) who reported that the majority of the FPT students sampled were male between the ages of 20 – 24 years. The table also shows that the majority (78%) and (84%) of the respondents in Unilorin and KWASU resides off – campus respectively while Landmark university had the highest (90%) of the agricultural science students residing on campus. This may be because Landmark University is a faith based university that tries to regulate and monitor the activities of its students whereas Unilorin and KWASU are public institutions that may not be able to provide accommodation for its teaming students' population on the campus. The table further shows that the majority of the respondents' parents were majorly civil servants with only a few of them engaged in farming as their major occupation. Oloruntoba (2008) reported that most of the FPT students were males (60%) and the majority (73%) secured accommodation off -campus during the session.

**Perceived Constraint faced by the Students during FPT**

Table 2 presents the constraints faced by the respondents during the farm practical training.

**Table 2: Mean distribution of respondents according to constraint faced by the students during FPT**

| S/N | Statements | Unilorin/ Ranking | | KWASU/ Ranking | | Landmark/ Ranking | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Not living on the campus | 1.96 | 9 | 2.42 | 6 | 1.22 | 9 |
| 2 | Lack of inputs and other operating supplies to do adequate practical job | 3.12 | 2 | 2.56 | 4 | 2.60 | 4 |
| 3 | Lack of safety ware exposes students to danger | 2.98 | 4 | 2.54 | 5 | 2.62 | 3 |
| 4 | Inadequate instructors to cope with teaching and supervision | 2.52 | 7 | 2.14 | 7 | 1.80 | 7 |
| 5 | Delayed in payment of allowances is demoralizing | 2.46 | 8 | 2.58 | 3 | 2.36 | 6 |
| 6 | Inadequate government subvention is lowering the quality of the programme. | 3.02 | 3 | 2.66 | 2 | 2.54 | 5 |
| 7 | Uncertainty in weather condition | 2.76 | 5 | 3.62 | 1 | 3.52 | 1 |
| 8 | Inadequate vehicle dedicated to conveying students to and from demonstration farms | 3.24 | 1 | 3.62 | 1 | 2.76 | 2 |
| 9 | Teachers failed to use combination of instructional strategies | 2.70 | 6 | 1.82 | 8 | 1.32 | 8 |

Table 2 shows that the most severe constraint faced by the respondents during the FPT was inadequate vehicle dedicated to conveying students to and from demonstration farms which ranked 1st in Unilorin, KWASU and ranked 2nd in Landmark University with a mean score of 3.24, 3.62 and 2.76 respectively. Also, uncertainty in weather condition ranked 1st in Landmark University and KWASU as the most severed constraint faced by the students with a mean score of 3.52 and 3.62 respectively. Oloruntoba (2008) reported that the uncertainty in weather condition was not regarded as a problem by the majority of the students (82.7%).

In Landmark University, lack of safety wares which prevent the students from, and lack of inputs and other operating supplies to do adequate practical job ranked 3rd and 4th respectively as constraints faced by the respondents during the FPT. The results further shows that the students' place of accommodation on or off – campus was not a constraint during the FPT across the selected universities. Only university of Ilorin had adequate training instructor (x = 2.52) who employed a combination of teaching methods or instructional strategies (x = 2.70).

**Level of Satisfaction of the Activities involved in FPT by the Students**

Table 3 presents the students level of satisfaction with the FPT. The table shows that agricultural students from the University of Ilorin were most satisfied with planting operation (x = 3.20), nursery bed preparation (x = 3.06), ruminant and non – ruminant management (x = 2.98), and harvesting of crops (x = 2.96). They had little or no satisfaction with excursion (x = 1.98), analysis of soil samples and classification (x = 2.38), method of pesticides application (x = 2.38) and practical exposure to farm machinery and maintenance (x = 2.44).

The agricultural students from KWASU were satisfied with nursery bed preparation (x=3.98), planting operation (x=3.46), land clearing and preparation (x=3.40), method of fertilizer application (x=3.24), and ruminant and non – ruminant management (x=3.12).

**Table 3: Mean response to the level of satisfaction of the activities involved during FPT by the students**

| S/N | Items | Unilorin/ Ranking | | KWASU/ Ranking | | Landmark/ Ranking | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Land clearing or preparation | 2.80 | 7 | 3.40 | 3 | 3.34 | 1 |
| 2 | Nursery or bed making | 3.06 | 2 | 3.98 | 1 | 3.06 | 7 |
| 3 | Planting | 3.20 | 1 | 3.46 | 2 | 2.34 | 13 |
| 4 | Fertilizer application | 2.62 | 10 | 3.24 | 4 | 3.04 | 8 |
| 5 | Manuring | 2.74 | 8 | 2.80 | 8 | 3.16 | 4 |
| 6 | Weeding | 2.82 | 6 | 2.70 | 9 | 3.14 | 5 |
| 7 | Pesticide application | 2.38 | 12 | 2.90 | 7 | 3.28 | 2 |
| 8 | Harvesting of crops | 2.96 | 4 | 2.92 | 6 | 2.98 | 9 |
| 9 | Processing of farm produce | 2.84 | 5 | 2.90 | 7 | 3.24 | 3 |
| 10 | Ruminant and non-ruminant management | 2.98 | 3 | 3.12 | 5 | 2.94 | 11 |
| 11 | Excursion | 1.98 | 13 | 2.36 | 12 | 3.10 | 6 |
| 12 | Cobes(village work) | 2.66 | 9 | 2.26 | 13 | 3.06 | 7 |
| 13 | Practical exposure to farm machinery and maintenance | 2.44 | 11 | 2.68 | 10 | 2.98 | 10 |
| 14 | Analysis of soil samples and classification | 2.38 | 12 | 2.48 | 11 | 2.86 | 12 |

Ayanda *et al*. (2013) found that the majority (81.6 %) of the students reported that FPT was a good platform to learn about preferred aspects of farming or areas of specialization through work related practical experiences. The students had little or no satisfaction with COBES/village works (x=2.26), excursion (x=2.36) and analysis of soil samples and classification (x=2.48).

The Landmark university agricultural students were highly satisfied with all the activities carried out during the FPT apart from planting operation with a mean score of (x=2.34). This implies that the students were more satisfied with teaching method, the training resources and the training received during the FPT. This may be because Landmark University is a private university that has a considerable interest in agriculture with a well-established teaching and research farms, and commercial farms employed in teaching the students.

**Perceived Attitude of the students towards FPT**

Table 4 presents the students attitude towards FPT. It shows that the majority of the students had a positive attitude towards farm practical training.

**Table 4: Mean score of the perceived attitude of students towards FPT.**

| S/N | Perception of students towards FPT | Unilorin/ Ranking | | KWASU/ Ranking | | Landmark/ Ranking | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Time of training was appropriate for learning. | 3.46 | 2 | 3.68 | 2 | 2.94 | 9 |
| 2 | FPT has contributes to my practical skills. | 3.30 | 4 | 3.56 | 4 | 2.84 | 10 |
| 3 | FPT does not related to the classroom lecture. | 2.38 | 12 | 1.66 | 15 | 1.86 | 13 |
| 4 | I do not have a clear understanding of what I was taught. | 1.93 | 15 | 1.58 | 16 | 1.72 | 14 |
| 5 | Students were provided with adequate working tools. | 2.00 | 14 | 2.96 | 10 | 3.20 | 5 |
| 6 | The facilitators are very skillful in handling the training programme. | 2.64 | 11 | 3.34 | 6 | 3.08 | 8 |
| 7 | The training provided relevant industrial skills and experience relevant to my course of study. | 3.08 | 6 | 3.18 | 9 | 3.12 | 7 |
| 8 | Methods of teaching practical skills were laborious. | 2.90 | 8 | 2.72 | 12 | 3.16 | 6 |
| 9 | FPT is a time-waster | 1.74 | 16 | 2.16 | 14 | 1.98 | 11 |
| 10 | FPT duration is quite right | 2.78 | 9 | 3.32 | 7 | 3.26 | 4 |
| 11 | My parents perception of FPT is negative | 2.02 | 13 | 2.30 | 13 | 1.92 | 12 |
| 12 | FPT is a good programme | 3.32 | 3 | 3.74 | 1 | 3.36 | 3 |
| 13 | The FPT is an eye-opener | 3.24 | 5 | 3.32 | 7 | 3.16 | 6 |
| 14 | My enthusiasm about FPT before we started was negative | 2.74 | 10 | 3.36 | 5 | 3.42 | 2 |
| 15 | I believe I made a right decision to enroll in agriculture | 2.98 | 7 | 3.24 | 8 | 3.42 | 2 |
| 16 | Peer group interactions during FPT is a worthwhile experience | 3.52 | 1 | 3.58 | 3 | 3.48 | 1 |
| 17 | My parent's impression of FPT is positive | 3.24 | 5 | 2.94 | 11 | 3.08 | 8 |
| | Sum of mean | 47.27 | | 50.64 | | 49.00 | |
| | Grand mean | 2.78 | | 2.97 | | 2.88 | |
| | Attitudinal Index (AI) | 0.70(70%) | | 0.74(74%) | | 0.72(72%) | |

The University of Ilorin students had a positive attitude towards FPT with a mean score of 2.78 and attitudinal index of 0.70(70%). This implies that over 70% of the students had a positive attitude towards farm practical training. The KWASU students had a mean score of 2.97 and attitudinal index of 0.74(74%) which implies that over 74% of the students had a positive attitude towards FPT. The Landmark University students had a mean score of 2.88 and attitudinal index of 0.72(72%). The implication of this is that the majority (72%) of the agricultural students from Landmark University had a positive attitude towards farm practical training. KWASU with A.I of 0.74 had a more favourable attitude towards FPT compare to Landmark University (AI=0.72) and Unilorin (A.I=0.70). Though, there is no significant difference in the attitude of agricultural students towards farm practical training across the three institutions. Yusuf *et al*. (2017) found that both University of Ilorin and Kwara state University students as a result of their exposure to the training and new skills, had a favourable attitude towards FPT.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that most of the respondents from KWASU and Landmark University were male in the teens advancing from childhood to adulthood. That is, they were in their early youthful age. University of Ilorin had more female agricultural students than male. Inadequate vehicle dedicated to conveying students to and from demonstration farms, and uncertainty in weather conditions were the major constraints faced by the students across the three institutions during the farm practical training.

The majority of the agricultural students had a favourable attitude towards FPT across the three institutions with Landmark University students having a more favourable attitude to FPT compare to KWASU and Unilorin. Based on the findings from this study, the following recommendations were drawn;

1. The universities managements should try to provide the students and staff with vehicles for conveying them to and from the demonstration farms.
2. The university management should ensure that the programme is strictly supervised.
3. The industrial training fund (ITF) officials should also endeavor to supervise agricultural students undertaking their SIWES on the farms in their various institutions.
4. The universities management should do more to provide instructional resources dedicated for FPT, to facilitate teaching and learning during the programme.
5. Kwara state university and Landmark University should admit more female students in order to encourage them to take career in agriculture.

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