

**ESTABLISHMENT OF SCHOOL FARMS: ASSESSING ITS ROLES IN
DEVELOPING ENTREPRENEURIAL VENTURES FOR PUBLIC TERTIARY
INSTITUTIONS IN AKWA IBOM STATE**

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the establishment of school farms in public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State, with a focus on their role in developing entrepreneurial ventures among students. In carrying out the study, a descriptive survey design was adopted. The study was carried out in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised all management members of tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. This included Deputy Vice Chancellors Admin, Bursars, and Deans of the Faculty of Agriculture in universities; Deputy Provosts Admin and Bursars in colleges of education; and Deputy Rectors Admin and Bursars in polytechnics. A judgmental sampling technique was used in selecting respondents from tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State, namely: University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State University, Federal University of Technology Akwa Ibom State, Akwa Ibom State College of Education, Federal College of Education, Federal Polytechnic Ukana, and Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic. This gave a total sample size of 17 respondents drawn from the selected institutions. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "School Farms and Development of Entrepreneurial Ventures Questionnaire" (SFDEVQ). The instrument was validated by an expert in Test, Measurement, and Evaluation to ensure its clarity and suitability. A reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained, confirming the reliability of the instrument. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics to answer the research questions. The result of findings revealed that the highest role of school farms in entrepreneurial development was "providing hands-on entrepreneurial training (35.29%)", while the least role was "sustainability and long-term business thinking (5.88%)". It was also found that the highest percentage of the benefit of establishing school farms was "entrepreneurship development (23.53%)", while the least benefit was "community engagement and extension services (5.88%)." The study concluded that there is need for strategic planning, policy support, and partnerships with government and private stakeholders to maximize the benefits of school farms. One of the recommendations made was that institutions should collaborate with agricultural development agencies, NGOs, and private agribusiness firms.

**KEYWORDS: School Farms, Entrepreneurial Ventures, Public Tertiary Institutions,
Akwa Ibom State**

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized as a key driver of economic development, particularly in regions where formal employment opportunities are limited and self-reliance is essential for youth empowerment. In this context, school farms in public tertiary institutions provide a practical platform for cultivating entrepreneurial skills among students, combining experiential learning with real-world business practices (Adeoti, 2021; Ojo, 2022). These farms allow students to engage directly in agricultural production, resource management, and value addition processes, equipping them with the knowledge and competencies necessary to establish and manage profitable enterprises. Beyond skill acquisition, school farms serve as incubators for innovative ideas, fostering creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking while providing opportunities for students to generate income and contribute to institutional sustainability (Adewale & Igbokwe, 2020).

Despite their potential, the effectiveness of school farms in developing entrepreneurial ventures is often constrained by factors such as insufficient funding, inadequate infrastructure, lack of technical expertise, and limited institutional support (Ukoha & Nwachukwu, 2021). Addressing these challenges requires coordinated interventions from institutional administrators, policymakers, and private stakeholders to create an enabling environment that promotes both practical learning and business development. Assessing the roles of school farms in nurturing entrepreneurial skills is therefore critical for understanding how public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State can leverage agricultural education to empower students and stimulate sustainable economic growth.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the study is to examine the roles of establishing school farms in developing entrepreneurial ventures in public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study sought:

1. To examine the roles of school farms in developing entrepreneurial ventures in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.
2. To identify the benefits of establishing school farms in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the roles of school farms in developing entrepreneurial ventures in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State?
2. What are the benefits of establishing school farms in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of School Farms

School farms refer to organized agricultural units established within educational institutions, particularly secondary schools and tertiary institutions, for the purpose of teaching, research, and practical training in agriculture. They serve as experiential learning environments where students apply theoretical knowledge to real-life farming activities such as crop production, livestock management, and agribusiness operations. This hands-on approach enhances students' understanding of agricultural concepts and improves their technical and entrepreneurial skills (Kolb & Kolb, 2020; Onwuka & Okoye, 2021).

The idea of school farms includes research, creativity, and community involvement in addition to basic education. School farms serve as testing grounds for new farming technologies, enhanced crop varieties, and sustainable farming methods in higher education. This supports academic research and contributes to the advancement of modern agriculture (Klerkx et al., 2020). School farms are also intended to encourage institutional self-sufficiency and food security. The produce from these farms can be used to support institutional feeding programs or sold to generate income, thereby contributing to financial sustainability (Ojo et al., 2022). Additionally, they help pupils develop virtues like accountability, cooperation, and environmental stewardship.

The idea of school farms has changed recently to include climate-smart and sustainable methods, including organic farming, agroforestry, and effective resource management. These approaches prepare students to address contemporary agricultural challenges while promoting environmentally responsible farming systems (Pretty et al., 2021). All things considered, school farms are an essential component of agricultural education, fusing instruction, research, and business growth to give students the skills required for contemporary agriculture.

HOW TO ESTABLISH SCHOOL FARMS

Establishing school farms is a successful way to encourage hands-on agricultural education, improve food security, and help students develop their entrepreneurial abilities. A school farm is a plot of land inside or close to a school where crops and/or cattle are raised for both educational and commercial reasons. The theory is consistent with ideas of experiential learning, especially John Dewey's contention that active engagement and experience are the best ways to learn.

Establishing a school farm starts with careful planning and goal-setting. The goals of the farm, whether for educational purposes, revenue generating, or both, must be made plain by school administrators. This entails incorporating the farm into the curriculum, particularly in courses like biology and agricultural science. The Food and Agriculture Organization claims that school farms work as hands-on labs where students may put their theoretical knowledge to use, increasing comprehension and retention (FAO, 2019).

Another important consideration is the choice of site. Accessible, fertile, and safe land should be selected for the farm. It is advised to examine the soil to see if it is suitable for certain crops. Crop production, livestock units, storage facilities, and irrigation systems should all have enough area. Since irrigation may be necessary during dry seasons, access to

water is crucial. According to studies, choosing the right location has a big impact on farm sustainability and output (Ogunlade & Adebayo, 2020).

Site selection is followed by infrastructural development and land preparation. This include plowing, clearing the area, and erecting necessary buildings like tool sheds, fences, and animal housing. Additionally, basic agriculture equipment and tools need to be purchased. Additionally, to lower expenses and lessen their influence on the environment, schools can implement sustainable methods like organic farming and composting (Ajayi et al., 2021).

Choosing appropriate businesses is the next stage. Depending on the resources available, schools can produce livestock, cultivate crops, or do both. Vegetables, corn, and cassava are common crops, whereas poultry, fish aquaculture, and small ruminants are examples of livestock alternatives. The decision should take market demand and regional circumstances into account. Combining several businesses can improve educational opportunities and diversify revenue streams (FAO, 2020).

For school farms to be successful, management and monitoring are essential. While students actively engage in farm tasks like planting, weeding, feeding animals, and harvesting, qualified agricultural science teachers or farm instructors should supervise day-to-day operations. In addition to developing practical skills, this hands-on experience fosters discipline and teamwork. To monitor agricultural inputs, outputs, and financial performance, effective record-keeping is crucial (Ojo & Ibrahim, 2022).

Sustainability and funding must also be taken into account. Government assistance, school budgets, or community donations could provide the initial funds. Produce sales can eventually bring in money for the farm, which can then be put back into the project. Additional financial and technical assistance can be obtained through collaborations with regional farmers, agricultural organizations, and non-governmental groups. Careful planning, appropriate site selection, resource management, and active student participation are all necessary for starting a school farm. When used properly, school farms are useful teaching resources that help close the knowledge gap between theory and practice, advance agricultural development, and give students vital life skills.

ROLES OF SCHOOL FARMS IN DEVELOPING ENTREPRENEURIAL VENTURES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

Because they offer students real-world experience, business opportunities, and platforms for innovation, school farms in postsecondary institutions are essential in helping students develop their entrepreneurial skills. These farms are vital resources for giving students the information and abilities needed to start and run profitable businesses as agriculture increasingly turns to agribusiness.

➤ Providing hands-on entrepreneurial training

Giving practical entrepreneurial training is one important function. Students can actively engage in production, processing, and marketing operations on school farms, which helps them comprehend the entire agricultural value chain. This practical experience enhances their ability to identify business opportunities and develop viable agribusiness ventures (Adeosun & Shittu, 2021).

➤ **Incubation of agribusiness ideas**

The development of agribusiness concepts is another crucial function. School farms serve as company incubation facilities where students can test and hone their entrepreneurial concepts in a safe setting. They can experiment with crop production, livestock rearing, and value-added products, reducing the risks associated with starting a business after graduation (Ojo et al., 2022).

➤ **Innovation and creativity**

Additionally, school farms foster creativity and innovation. Students create new farming methods, goods, and business models through investigation and experimenting. This innovation is essential for addressing modern agricultural challenges and creating competitive enterprises (Klerkx et al., 2020).

➤ **Access to resources and infrastructure**

Additionally, school farms facilitate access to resources and infrastructure. Students gain from shared access to resources including land, machinery, inputs, and technical know-how that would be challenging to acquire on their own. This support lowers entry barriers into agribusiness and encourages entrepreneurial participation (Onwuka & Okoye, 2021).

➤ **Development of managerial and financial skills**

The development of administrative and financial abilities is another important aspect. Students gain knowledge of resource management, marketing, record-keeping, and budgeting through participation in agricultural activities. These skills are critical for running successful entrepreneurial ventures in agriculture and related sectors (Adeosun & Shittu, 2021).

➤ **Collaboration and networking**

Additionally, school farms promote networking and teamwork. Through their interactions with academics, researchers, business leaders, and nearby farmers, students build important networks that can aid in their entrepreneurial endeavors. Such connections often lead to partnerships, mentorship, and access to funding opportunities (Klerkx et al., 2020).

➤ **Income generation and financial empowerment**

Additionally, school farms support financial empowerment and revenue generating. Students who participate in farm businesses are encouraged to pursue agribusiness as a career because they can profit from the sale of farm produce. This practical exposure to profit-making reinforces entrepreneurial mindset and confidence (Ojo et al., 2022).

➤ **Sustainability and long-term business thinking**

Lastly, school farms foster long-term business thinking and sustainability. By promoting sustainable agricultural practices, students learn how to build environmentally responsible and economically viable enterprises that can thrive in the long term (Pretty et al., 2021).

BENEFITS OF ESTABLISHING SCHOOL FARMS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

As a useful strategy for agricultural education, food production, and sustainable development, the introduction of school farms in postsecondary institutions has grown in significance. These farms function as living labs where students may combine classroom instruction with practical experience, improving the caliber of agricultural education.

➤ **Practical skill acquisition**

Acquiring practical skills is one of the main advantages. Students can participate directly in farming tasks such as crop cultivation, animal management, and farm mechanization at school farms. This experiential learning improves students' competence, confidence, and readiness for careers in agriculture and related sectors (Kolb & Kolb, 2020; Onwuka & Okoye, 2021).

➤ **Promotion of research and innovation**

The encouragement of innovation and research is another significant benefit. Students and researchers can test new technology, crop types, and farming methods at tertiary institution farms. This contributes to the development of innovative solutions to agricultural challenges such as low productivity and climate change (Klerkx et al., 2020).

➤ **Food security and income generation**

Additionally, school farms help generate revenue and provide food security. These farms' products can be sold to make money or utilized to augment the institution's food supply. This helps reduce operational costs and provides financial support for academic and farm-related activities (Ojo et al., 2022).

➤ **Entrepreneurship development**

School farms also help kids improve their entrepreneurial skills. Students learn about marketing, financial planning, and value chain growth by taking part in farm management and agribusiness activities. This prepares them to establish their own agricultural enterprises after graduation (Adeosun & Shittu, 2021).

➤ **Promotion of sustainable agricultural practices**

The encouragement of sustainable farming methods is another important advantage. Environmentally friendly practices, including organic farming, agroforestry, and conservation

agriculture, can be taught on school farms. This helps instill a culture of sustainability among students, which is essential for future agricultural development (Pretty et al., 2021).

➤ **Community engagement and extension service**

Additionally, school farms improve extension programs and community involvement. Tertiary universities may train local farmers, showcase better practices, and share agricultural discoveries on their fields. This strengthens the link between academia and the farming community (Klerkx et al., 2020).

➤ **Interdisciplinary learning and collaboration**

Lastly, school farms foster collaboration and interdisciplinary learning. Students from a variety of disciplines, including business, engineering, environmental science, and agriculture, can collaborate on farm projects to develop cooperation and comprehensive problem-solving abilities.

METHODOLOGY

In carrying out the study, a descriptive survey design was adopted. The study was carried out in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised all management members of tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. This included Deputy Vice Chancellors Admin, Bursars, and Deans of the Faculty of Agriculture in universities; Deputy Provosts Admin and Bursars in colleges of education; and Deputy Rectors Admin and Bursars in polytechnics. A judgmental sampling technique was used in selecting respondents from tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State, namely: University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State University, Federal University of Technology Akwa Ibom State, Akwa Ibom State College of Education, Federal College of Education, Federal Polytechnic Ukana, and Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic. This gave a total sample size of 17 respondents drawn from the selected institutions. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled “School Farms and Development of Entrepreneurial Ventures Questionnaire” (SFDEVQ). The instrument was validated by an expert in Test, Measurement, and Evaluation to ensure its clarity and suitability. A reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained, confirming the reliability of the instrument. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics to answer the research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Questions 1:

The research question sought to examine the roles of school farms in developing entrepreneurial ventures in tertiary institutions. To answer the research question, percentage analysis was performed on the data (see Table 1).

Table 1:

Percentage analysis of the roles of school farms in developing entrepreneurial ventures

Roles of school farms	FRQ	%
Providing hands-on entrepreneurial training	6	35.29**
Incubation of agribusiness ideas	4	23.53
Innovation and creativity	3	17.65
Access to resources and infrastructure	2	11.76
Development of managerial and financial skills	2	11.76
Collaboration and networking	2	11.76
Income generation and financial empowerment	2	11.76
Sustainability and long-term business thinking	1	5.88*
TOTAL	17	100

****The highest percentage frequency**

***The least percentage frequency**

SOURCE: Field survey

The table 1 presents the percentage analysis of the roles of school farms in developing entrepreneurial ventures in tertiary institutions. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the highest percentage (35.29) was recorded against “providing hands-on entrepreneurial training,” while the least percentage (5.88) was recorded against “sustainability and long-term business thinking”. This study supports the findings of Adeosun and Shittu (2021), who noted that practical entrepreneurial training is a key function of school farms. Students actively engage in production, processing, and marketing activities, which helps them understand the agricultural value chain. This practical exposure enhances their ability to identify business opportunities and develop viable agribusiness ventures. The study also aligns with the findings of Ojo et al. (2022), who stated that school farms serve as incubation platforms where students can test and develop entrepreneurial ideas in a safe environment. They are exposed to crop production, livestock rearing and value-added processing, thereby reducing the risks associated with post-graduation entrepreneurship.

Research Questions 2:

The research question sought to identify the benefits of establishing school farms in tertiary institutions. To answer the research question, percentage analysis was performed on the data (see Table 2).

Table 2:

Percentage analysis of the benefits of establishing school farms in tertiary institutions

Benefits of establishing school farms	FRQ	%
Practical skill acquisition	3	17.65
Promotion of research and innovation	2	11.76
Food security and income generation	3	17.65
Entrepreneurship development	4	23.53**
Promotion of sustainable agricultural practices	2	11.76
Community engagement and extension service	1	5.88*
Interdisciplinary learning and collaboration	2	11.76
TOTAL	17	100

****The highest percentage frequency**

***The least percentage frequency**

SOURCE: Field survey

Table 2 presents the percentage analysis of the benefits of establishing school farms in tertiary institutions. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the highest percentage (23.53) was recorded against “entrepreneurship development,” while the least percentage (5.88) was recorded against “community engagement and extension service”. This study agrees with Adeosun and Shittu (2021), who noted that school farms enhance students’ entrepreneurial development. Through participation in farm management and agribusiness activities, students acquire skills in marketing, financial planning, and value chain development. This prepares them to establish agricultural enterprises after graduation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the establishment of school farms in public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State plays a vital role in nurturing entrepreneurial skills and fostering innovative agricultural ventures among students. These farms bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, equipping students with the competencies needed to manage businesses, generate income, and contribute to local and regional economic development. However, to fully realize their potential, school farms must overcome challenges such as insufficient funding, limited technical support, inadequate infrastructure, and weak institutional policies. With strategic planning, policy backing, and partnerships with private and government stakeholders, school farms can become powerful platforms for cultivating entrepreneurial mindsets, enhancing self-reliance, and promoting sustainable business practices among students in public tertiary institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Government and institutional management should prioritize consistent funding for the establishment and maintenance of school farms.
- School farms should be fully integrated into the academic curriculum of relevant disciplines. Practical farming activities should carry academic credits, encouraging students to actively participate.
- Institutions should collaborate with agricultural development agencies, NGOs, and private agribusiness firms.

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