

ABSTRACT

Agriculture in Barbados in 21st Century -The Perception of Barbadian Secondary School Students of Careers in Agriculture

Victoria Bedford

In recent times, in North America and the United Kingdom, the issues relating to careers in agriculture have received much attention. Furthermore conversations with employers and educators in the agricultural sector have revealed that very few young Barbadians are attracted to careers in agriculture. Additionally there are very few young people enrolled in the island's agricultural programmes.

The situation facing the agricultural sector in Barbados mirrors the general findings in North America, in spite of, in the case of the latter nation the wide availability and diversity of jobs in this sector (Jones and Larke, 2001; Wildman and Torres, 2001). Consequently, my research sought to investigate what is the perception of secondary school students of careers in agriculture.

The majority of the data used in this research was collected from among 100 sixth form students who are at the school -leaving age, since in most cases students of this age have either selected a career or have narrowed down their list of possible careers. In addition, a focus group discussion was held which involved eight students from the 100 sixth form students who completed the questionnaires. Further, because the majority of jobs in agriculture are science oriented, the sample was drawn from among science students.

The objectives were: - (1) to identify the individual(s) who influence(s) students in their career choice (2) To ascertain the perception of students relating to careers in agriculture (3) To discover what in the opinion of sixth form students is agriculture (4) To identify the career plans of sixth form science students in three prestige schools in Barbados (5) to identify the sources of information used by students in deciding on their future careers (6) To determine what is the most important job-related feature in the selection of a career by a sixth form science student.

Findings revealed that by sixth forms most students have settled on a career. Furthermore none of the respondents are desirous of entering an agriculture related occupation, most are not very knowledgeable on careers in agriculture and wish to remain in that state. However they are cognisant of the economic importance of this sector to the economy. In addition these students utilised a wide range of sources during their process of selecting a career. Moreover, among the respondents in this sample, the potential income to be derived from a future career is the most important factor in the selection of a career.