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Nurturing Inclusive Community Empowerment (NICE) through the Promotion of Agri-Fisheries Techno-Preneurship

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Abstract

Aim: This project is designed to promote Agri-Technopreneurship in the farming communities of Ilocos Sur and its neighboring provinces.
Methodology: The project adopts the technology diffusion framework or the input process output model in research and development. It comprises earning while you learn, farmers/Fishermen Training on entrepreneurship and other integrative business skills, Women's Empowerment through skills training, and the development of ICT-enhanced learning kits.
Results: Results showed the level of awareness of the college's students, faculty, staff, and farming/fishing families in the communities and other online users on the importance of the program and the different technologies generated. The study selected students in Agriculture, Fisheries, and other related courses who have shown interest in venturing into techno-preneurship while learning. The study showcased the egg production, goat raising, rice production, and vegetable production establishments in Sta. Maria Campus, an incubator for agri-fishery techno-preneurship, which served as a practical learning tool to deepen interests in Agri-technopreneurs. Training on ICT-based educational and training materials helps the students and faculty develop IEC materials for instruction, research, and extension.
Conclusion: Providing technical, financial, and marketing assistance to farming families as start-ups in promoting agri-technopreneurship is an effective tool for developing and deepening interest in a small-scale enterprise.
Recommendation: To sustain the developed technology, a counterpart-sharing system between the school and the farming families is necessary.

Keywords: nurturing, communities, agri-preneurship

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INTRODUCTION

The Philippine Development Plan Framework for inclusive growth maintains that the workforce's education, skills, and health contribute to the competitiveness of productive sectors like agriculture. Competitiveness increases jobs, resulting in inspired and sustained economic growth, equal development opportunities, and a sustainable and climate-resilient environment. Ultimately, massive employment creation and poverty reduction in multiple dimensions will be created. Farmers in the Philippines comprise the majority of those below the poverty line because they lack entrepreneurial competence and need marketing and financial literacy (Pinol, 2018).

Dar (2018) pointed out that more than increasing farm and food production for our country's agriculture to prosper, "we must transform agriculture into agribusiness, and farmers into agripreneurs". When these goals are attained, an agri-industrialized countryside will usher in, providing a range of socio-economic developments characterized by poverty reduction, employment generation, income generation, and national food security. A meta-analysis of research results confirmed that providing a package of training and financing is more effective for labor activities. Additionally, financing support appears more effective.

Nurturing Inclusive Community Empowerment (NICE) Through the Promotion of Agri-Fisheries Techno-Preneurship is a program that will enhance the quality of knowledge, develop positive attitudes and relevant skills of graduates in agriculture, fishery, and forestry programs, and will deepen the engagement in agriculture and fisheries.

The proposed extension program is focused on the priority areas in agricultural extensions like entrepreneurship education for farmers and fishermen, computer-aided modalities of delivering agricultural extension communities, blended learning technologies in agricultural and fisheries higher education, career advocacy campaigns in agriculture and fisheries for junior high schools and marketing and financial literacy for farm and fishing communities.

The project adopts the technology diffusion extension framework or the input process output model in research and development. It presumes that the adoption of Agri-techno-preneurship technologies by farming families depends on the delivery modes used, the support and services provided, and the availability of scientific and empirical evidence. Promoting agri-entrepreneurship in the communities is believed to contribute to poverty reduction, employment generation, income generation, and national food security. Since the project is attuned to the national and international development priority goals, ultimately, it shall result in transformed lives and communities.

The NICE program is significant in redirecting the focus of agriculture and fishery graduates to farm entrepreneurship. The proper training delivered in various modalities will significantly promote the adoption of Agri-technopreneurship technologies. This study was then conceptualized in the end view helping students earn while studying, thus uplifting also the living condition of their families.

Objectives

This project is designed to promote Agri-Techno-preneurship in the farming communities of Ilocos Sur and its neighboring provinces. Specifically, it aimed:

1. To create opportunities for students of BS Agriculture, BS Fisheries, BS Forestry, and BS Agri-cultural Engineering courses to earn while learning.
2. To develop ICT-based educational and training materials (Virtual Classrooms) on entrepreneurship, marketing, and financial management for farmers and their families and to provide technical, financial, and marketing assistance to farming families
3. To establish an incubator for Agri-techno-enterprises on the Campus as a practical learning tool in developing and deepening students' and farmers' interests in Agri-techno-premiership through training and other integrative learning skills
4. To provide technical, financial, and marketing assistance to women/farming families as start-ups promoting Agri- fishery-techno-preneurship in the communities.

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Hypothesis: If the project promotes Agri-technopreneurs in the farming communities of Ilocos Sur and its neighboring provinces, it will uplift the living conditions of farming families.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This developmental design uses different modes to adopt Agri-preneurship technologies given to students and their farming/fishing families. Developmental in the sense that this was done by promoting Agri-entrepreneurship in the communities with the aid of communication media like Facebook, group chat, distribution of fliers, and radio broadcasting.

Population and Sampling

For the whole duration of the program (two years), the following are the target beneficiaries/participants:

Beneficiaries	Number	Mode Extension Delivery	Expected Gains/Benefits
Earn While You Learn project			
Information dissemination. Campaign ✓ College Students	1,000 (target)	Facebook, Group Chat, and flier distribution	Enhanced quality of knowledge, positive attitudes, relevant skills, and deepened engagement in agriculture and fisheries.
Campus Tour/Information dissemination ✓ Junior and Senior High Schools	1,000 (target)	Face-to-face/online	Increased knowledge and deepened interest in agriculture and fisheries
Identification/Selection of Beneficiaries of the Program (students)	50 (target)	Face to Face	Qualified beneficiaries
Mentoring/ Training ✓ Project Proposal Preparation/ Business Planning	50 (same students)	Face to Face	Technical, financial, and marketing support for Agri-technopreneurship
Farmers/Fishermen Training on entrepreneurship and other integrative business skills			
Information dissemination/Campaign ✓ Farmers, Fisherfolks, etc.	1,000 (target)	Virtual flatform	Enhanced quality of knowledge, positive attitudes, relevant skills, and deepened engagement in agriculture and fisheries.
Identification/Selection of Beneficiaries of the Program for farming families	10 farming /fishermen families (target)	Face to Face	Training, financial, and marketing support

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✓ Skills training in business mgt/financial literacy a. Broiler production ✓ Skills Training on technopreneurship in meat processing, fish processing, and broiler production (students and parents)			
Women's Empowerment through skills training ✓ Skills Training on technopreneurship, project proposal/business mgt, and marketing plan ✓ Financial Literacy and Business Management ✓ Skills Training in Food Processing	(Target 50 participants) 30 (Actual) 34 (actual) 35 (actual)	 Face to Face Face to Face Face to Face	Training, entrepreneurial skills development Knowledge of Business Management Skills Development in Food Processing
Development of ICT-enhanced Learning Kits ✓ Graduate Faculty and Students **Research Proposal Preparation** ✓ Agriculture and Fisheries Students (to be done for the 2nd year of Implementation)	 50 (target) 20 (actual) 50 (target)	 Face-to-face and virtual flatform	Developed interest in the development of IEC materials Deepened interest in agricultural research and development

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In the Earn, while you learn to project, 2nd- and third-year students were identified/selected as beneficiaries. They were trained in project proposal preparation/business planning and marketing and the skills in which the students were selected to engage in business ventures.

Data Gathering Procedure

The dissemination of the program component is essential so that the audiences/participants/beneficiaries are aware of the different activities implemented. This was done through meetings with the different project teams, giving proposals and MOA to the finance officers. Dissemination was also conducted through radio broadcasting, group chat, and a Facebook page.

The program is composed of the following projects and activities:

1. Earn While You Learn. The project involves the creation of opportunities for students to earn while they are pursuing their education at ISPSC and be provided assistance in coming up with a start-up enterprise. The activities include the identification of beneficiaries and project coaches, mentoring, training on project proposal preparation, financial and business management, and signing a memorandum of agreement. Monitoring and evaluation of the project were also done to ensure that the project was fully implemented, and the turnover of the start-up capital was also done after three consecutive cycles.

2. Development of ICT-enhanced Learning Kits

This project recognizes the development of quality outcomes in education by blending various tools like ICT-enhanced learning, campus tour, campus laboratory, education training, and other learning modalities. This aspect of the project includes training faculty experts and students, particularly the graduating students researching to train on photo and videography and preparing ICT-based learning tools (fliers and posters).

3. Farmers/Fishermen Training on entrepreneurship and other integrative business skills

This part of the project provides the necessary preparation for the selected student beneficiaries and their families to ensure the sustainability of the established enterprises. Technical skills training includes priority agri-fishery-forestry enterprises as follows: hog raising/breeding, poultry raising/broiler production, rice/ corn production, organic vegetable production, high-value crop/off-season production, food processing (meat and fruit), sea urchin/catfish production, fish processing, fruit/forest tree seedling production, and other production and processing technologies identified by funding partners with high market potentials. The training was conducted based on the priority area selected by the beneficiaries.

4. Women's Empowerment Through Skills Training

The project encouraged more extraordinary women's participation in promoting and developing agri-fishery entrepreneurship. Thus, enhancement capability training was provided to women participants. Women participants were oriented with the basic technical and entrepreneurial skills and provided financial literacy training as much as women usually serve as treasurers or finance officers in their families. Added to this, skills training in fruit processing was also given.

Analysis of Data

Data generated from the project were collated and analyzed quantitatively. Total frequency count was used in determining the data for the online dissemination campaign on the different video presentation/technology posted, campus tours, the number of beneficiaries of the different projects given, and the training provided to farming families.

Ethical Consideration

The research protocols were observed to ensure the project's quality and reliability. The researchers sought approval from the Board of Trustees and the SUC President to conduct the study. After the approval, the researchers scheduled a meeting with the different coaches of the beneficiaries to give prior instructions on how to gather data. The researchers and the selected coaches personally conducted another meeting with the beneficiaries, sought consent letters from them, and expressed their willingness to participate in the project. All the needed information was provided to the researchers, and the data gathered remained confidential.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Program Information Dissemination

In preparation for implementing the program's different phases, the program leader requested a meeting with the concerned officials informing them of the different phases of the program. Designations of the project team were drafted and signed by the College President through a Special Order. Since Covid 19 is rampant in the province, a face-to-face meeting was conducted and attended by the assigned project leaders and coordinators informing the NAFES- NICE Program—provision of a hard copy of the approved proposal and MOA to the financial management offices. The program content and importance were disseminated through radio broadcasting at ISPSC Radio Station "Radio Kailan," a group chat, and a Facebook page.

To appropriately disseminate the information of the program to the community and in preparation for the identification of beneficiaries, there is a need to disseminate first the different agro-technopreneurship technologies/natural farming technologies developed in the college as the basis for the students and the farming/fishing families in the selection of technologies to be engaged with. The technologies were informed to the students with the help of the agriculture, fishery, and forestry faculty during their online classes. These technologies include organic vegetable production (Lettuce, Okra, Peanut), sea urchin/catfish production, fish processing, food processing (meat and fruit), and hog raising/breeding. Poultry raising/broiler production, rice/ corn production, high-valuable crop/off-season production (tomato), fruit/forest tree seedling production, and other production and processing technologies identified by funding partners with high market potential.

A. Earn While You Learn

Identification of Beneficiaries and Coaches

Student beneficiaries were identified by the project leader of the "Earn While You Learn" following the criteria set in the selection. The criteria were based on the willingness to venture/ start a small business, avail of a soft loan to cooperatives, or apply for a grant to "AgriBiz," and share the knowledge to be gained in the business.

Mentoring/Training on Project Proposal Preparation, Financial, and Business management

Operational plans were prepared in the project proposal/business plan making and skills training in Fish Processing. Two venues were identified, one in Sta: Maria Campus and the other in Narvacan Campus.

Memorandum of Agreement

A courtesy call and coordination with the Manager of the Sta. Maria-Burgos Multi-Purpose Cooperative and Abra Seed Growers Multi-Purpose Cooperative were conducted to present the program and project team members. Group discussion was initiated to include the MOA's content and the different parties' duties and responsibilities. A meeting with the student beneficiaries was also conducted to inform the requirements outlined in the MOA. Since the draft MOA was prepared, a thorough review was done and submitted to the parties concerned. The College Legal Officer will finally review the draft MOA before it is notarized and to be served to the different parties.

Implementation Phase

The project was implemented with broiler and vegetable production and meat/fish processing. Ten student recipients for broiler production, 5 recipients for vegetables, and 10 for meat and fish processing. Start-up capital was provided, and operation and management, including financial training conducted to acquire knowledge and skills. Three cycles have been done to determine the total profit earned from the project. Another batch of recipients was identified, and the technology and the start-up capital were transferred. This implies that being an entrepreneur means living without working for others (Namura, 2020).

B. Development of ICT-enhanced multi-media Learning Kits

Awareness-raising is a process that seeks to inform and educate people in the community to influence attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs toward the achievement of defined goals. As a starting point in developing IEC materials, techno-fliers were drafted with the aid of the two-project staff hired, a graduate of Information Technology and B. S. Agriculture knowledgeable in the works of IEC materials. The matured technology developed as a result of research in the college was checked and finalized before it was viewed on the Facebook page. This social media was utilized to capture a big audience in disseminating the technology to farmers/fishermen, students, and other professionals. Techno-fliers and video presentations on planting calendar, sea urchin production, organic vegetable production "Hydroponic production of Lettuce" were viewed, and the number who viewed through likes and comments were gathered and recorded.

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The usage of ICT will bring a notable impact not only the farm productivity but also on food fostering and rural development, especially for the intended beneficiaries who use the equipment made available for them in a meaningful way to cater to their needs. It has been deduced that the significant challenges in adopting ICT in rural areas are localizing information passed across in their language development is observed virtually, some of the ICT-driven resourcefulness is participatory of the human effort, which shows that it is human desperation in information knowledge transfer to farmers and people living in a community (Gelb, 2009).

C. Farmers/ Fishermen Training in Entrepreneurship and other Integrative Business Skills

This part of the project provides the necessary preparation for the selected student beneficiaries and their families to ensure the sustainability of the proposed enterprises. Technical skills training includes the selected enterprises based on the student and family's willingness to participate. Since the time does not warrant the conduct of the face-to-face activity, online training was conducted by the project in charge. Face-to-face training was also done in groups to observe the IATF requirements. This was a joint activity conducted and participated by the students and their families, including women at Danuman West and ISPSC Sta. Maria Campus with 30 participants.

D. Women Empowerment Training

The beneficiaries of the Skills Training on Rice Production, Broiler Production, and Vegetable Production were identified and conducted at Barangay Danuman, Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur. Skills Training on Business planning/Financial literacy and skills training were also given, and have a chance to avail of a grant submission at the Department of Agriculture. The same procedures were applied to the neighboring province of Abra, particularly in the municipality of Pidigan. Skills training on fruit (watermelon) processing was also conducted in partnership with the Abra Vegetable Seed Corporation. A starter kit was distributed to the farming women as a start-up in putting a business. This implies that women participating in the different pieces of training gained additional knowledge and skills, particularly in entrepreneurial activities, thus helping the head of the family earn additional income. Working collaboratively also indicates that women's strengths include working collaboratively, whole-picture thinking and decision-making, strong instincts, building relationships, nurturing growth, and sensitivity to trust and ethical issues. These qualities are invaluable in the workplace, yet women often hold themselves back due to lacking self-confidence, excess humility, and people-pleasing. (Aztec, nd). It also affirmed that the self-help group is the appropriate approach to empowering the poor rural woman, who is the paradigm of rural empowerment via rural poverty and the all-sided-sustainable development of the country in general (Pangannavar, 2015).

E. Other Training Conducted

As part of the project, training was conducted entitled "Development of ICT Enhance Multi-Media Leaning Kits," which was done for two days to help further the students and faculty research to learn IEC and knowledge transfer, which include mobile photo/videography and new media, basic photography/videography, basic layout design (photoshop), basic video editing and the role of ICT and new media in knowledge transfer. The conduct of lecture was accompanied by a different practical application which included a photo walk, scriptwriting for print and video, mentoring on photo and video editing, and ended with the presentation of outputs. Twenty participants attended the conduct of face-to-face training.

The data presented is a result of the activities conducted. This was presented in tabular form.

Target Date/Activity	Actual Accomplishment
A. Program awareness campaign/info dissemination/ campus tours	
1. Preparation of operational plan	✓ Zoom Meeting with five members of the Project Team – Orientation of the Program per project component ✓ Zoom and Face to face meetings (5 project team leaders discussion of the duties and responsibilities) ✓ The face-to-face meeting with the Project Team ✓ Orientation Meeting via face-to-face with 20 college faculty of the Agriculture, Forestry, and Engineering Department ✓ 48 students from the College of Agriculture participated in the online Mentoring on Agripreneurship for Young

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	Agripreneurs ✓ Orientation meeting of 8 faculty members in the College of Fisheries ✓ Campus tour of the student attendees during the orientation meeting
2. creation of a webpage, Facebook page, and GC	✓ Facebook page, webpage, and group chat were created, which were used to upload technologies generated in the college.
3. showcasing the technology on social media	✓ During official classes, it showcased the different technologies developed through Facebook and group chat.
4. recording and monitoring of attendance (likes, comments)	✓ Recorded the attendance of the viewers and listeners in the different technologies viewed on social media with 1,150 views e.g. a. Planting calendar b. Tilapia/Sea urchin production c. Lettuce production d. Meat Processing
5. Script-writing for information dissemination through radio broadcasting	✓ Disseminated the NAFES Nice program by airing on the radio "Kailian."
B. Identification of Beneficiaries (EARN WHILE YOU LEARN)	
1. Drafting of criteria for the selection of Beneficiaries	✓ Drafted the criteria based on the willingness to venture/to start a small business, willingness to avail of a soft loan to cooperatives or apply for a grant to AbriBiz" and willingness to share the knowledge to be gained in the business
2. Identification of the prospective advisers	✓ Identified eight faculty members for agriculture and three faculty members for fisheries
3. Identification of student beneficiaries	✓ Identified 17 tentative lists of students to avail of the Earn while you learn to program, including their families
C. Development of ICT-enhanced multi-media learning kits	
1. Preparation of OP for IEC materials development	✓ Prepared operational plan for two days of training on the development of IEC materials and multi-media learning kits consisting of different topics: a. IEC and knowledge transfer b. Scriptwriting for print and video production c. Basic photography/videography d. Basic layout design e. Basic video/photo editing ✓ Presentation of output
2. Development of video and fliers	✓ Fliers for planting calendar, sea urchin production, and lettuce production in hydroponics were distributed to participants during the orientation program, and training was conducted.
D. Farmers/Fishermen Training on entrepreneurship and other integrative business skills	

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1. Skills Training Fish Smoking	✓ Trained 20 students and another family the skills in fish smoking
2. Skills Training on Broiler Production	✓ Trained 43 students and another family the skills in broiler production
3. Skills Training in Meat Processing	✓ Trained 29 students and other families on the skills in meat processing
E. Skills Training on Women Empowerment	
1. Training in Business Plan, Preparation, and Mentoring	✓ Trained 30 women participants at Danuman West, sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur, on business plan preparation and mentoring
2. Financial Literacy and Product costing	✓ Trained 34 women participants at Suyo, Pidigan, and Abra on Financial Literacy and food costing
3. Skills Training Fruit Processing	✓ Trained 40 women participants at Pangtod, Pidigan, Abra on Skills Training on Fruit Processing
F. MOA Signing	
1. Courtesy Call to Cooperatives	✓ Went to Burgos-Sta. Maria Multi-Purpose Cooperative and ABRA Seed Growers Multipurpose Cooperative for courtesy call and discussion on the duties and responsibilities of the three parties
2. Drafting of MOA	✓ Drafted the MOA based on the duties and responsibilities of the different parties. This MOA was reviewed and forwarded to the funding agency. The funding agency accepted MOA and is ready for student loan application. ✓ Meeting with the student's beneficiaries regarding the requirements of the funding agency.

This implies that the training is vital and helps our students develop fliers and video presentations. On the positive side, ICT use can increase access to information and resources for learning, make lessons more attractive and/or interactive, increase students' flexibility and autonomy and facilitate individualized instruction and monitoring of student progress. On the negative side, ICT use may distract students, undermine students' need for work and discipline, restrict their creativity and reduce real interaction between students and teachers. The net effect of ICT use on students' outcomes may depend on whether the positive or the adverse effects prevail (Montoya, 2023).

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

The results showed that the level of awareness of the college's students, faculty, staff, and farming/fishing families in the communities and other online users positively developed by adopting the technology imparted and shows the importance of the program and the different technologies generated. Selected students in Agriculture, Fisheries, and other related courses who have shown interest in venturing into techno-preneurship while learning.

Showcasing the Egg Production, Goat raising, Rice production, and Vegetable Production establishments, As an incubator for agri-fishery techno-preneurship, Sta. Maria Campus served as a practical learning tool to deepen interest in Agri-technopreneurs. Training on ICT-based educational and training materials helps the students and faculty develop IEC materials for instruction, research, and extension.

Providing technical, financial, and marketing assistance to farming families as start-ups promoting agri-technopreneurship is an effective tool for developing and deepening interest in a small-scale enterprise. A counterpart-sharing system between the school and the farming families is needed to sustain the developed technology.

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