

POLICY BRIEF

MAY 2018

The Issue

The Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in the Philippines is experiencing a serious decline in the number of enrollees under AFF courses over the years. In 2011, CHED reported an almost 50% decline in the number of enrollees in agriculture, fisheries and forestry, and veterinary medicine in just a 10-year period from 1999-2000 to 2010-2011. Under-subscription to these courses bring an academe-industry mismatch considering that Philippine industries is heavily constituted of AFF. When not mitigated, this pose a serious threat in sustaining educated and skilled manpower such as scientists, technicians and future farmers and fisherfolk. In such case, it will be very hard to keep up with the continuous demand of the AFF industry, thereby contributing to economic instability.

To improve the subscription rate, it is essential to study and know first the factors influencing the students to decide in enrolling and/or continuing in AFF courses. By doing so, the government will be able to formulate the proper policies/programs/actions that will encourage the students to enroll in AFF courses, based on those factors.



Predisposition Factors of Students' Choice in Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (AFF) Courses in the Philippines*

The Study

This study is an inquiry into the personal profile; motivational, personality and extrinsic variables; and critical problems as influencing factors to the students' predisposition for agriculture, fisheries and forestry courses.

With descriptive-inter-correlational research design, 68 Higher Education Institutes across Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao were tapped. This study employed stratified, purposive and convenience sampling; utilized self-assessment for the career decision-making survey questionnaire (with 5 parts) for AFF second and fourth year students, used open-ended interview checklist for FGD with deans, research directors, program chairs and full time faculty as well as ACAP officials.

The Findings

General findings of this research reveal that out of 6,760 surveyed AFF enrollees, 17% stopped for 2 years prior to college education; across AFF programs, there is almost equal percentage of male and female; only 25.53% preferred their course; 73.43% came from rural areas; 54.67% of fathers' and only 19.47% of mothers' occupation are related to AFF occupation; 21.76% enrollees' fathers finished some years in the elementary level, 19.95% finished some years in high school; and 12.32% finished college degree; while 21.55% of the enrollees' mothers finished some years in high school, 16.55% finished high school and 13.95% finished college degree.

AFF students were predisposed at high extent to enroll their course influenced by personal ideal and social motives; and social, investigative and entrepreneurship personality inclinations. Likewise, they are predisposed with their strong agreement on job market/incentives and school image as extrinsic influencing factors. On the other hand, at moderate extent, students in agriculture and fisheries experienced problems with the instructional laboratory facilities (obsolete and limited demonstration farms); students of fisheries and forestry encounter unpleasant notion of the general public to their course; while forestry students on separate case experienced delay for the release of funds for the scholarship grants.

Lastly, there is significant difference in the predisposition of 2nd and 4th year students across AFF course: significant relationship of predisposition and profile variables vis-à-vis courses; and significant relationship of predisposition factors with problems encountered by students.

Most of the enrollees of the AFF programs are economically marginalized which infers that only high quality of education and promising employment can lift them up; their motivations and personality endowments as well as their extrinsic aspirations influencing their predisposition could serve them mechanism and arm to become responsive to countryside agricultural development, especially when critical problems encountered are seriously addressed.

The Policy Recommendations

These policy recommendations for legislation are strongly believed significantly contributory for Philippine HEIs' PIAs, PIFs, NUCAs and NUCAFs as being partners of lead government agencies particularly DA, DAR, DENR, and BFAR in the realization of country's nationwide vision for sustainable countryside socio-economic growth and development.

1 A comprehensive program for scholarship grants, financial assistance, socialized or free tuition fee schemes, for AFF students from entry to college to the time they take the reviews for board examinations be proposed for congressional legislations.

2 Based on the results of the AFF students' self-assessment, extrinsic influence is the common predisposing factor to younger students. It is inherently obligatory on the part of the Philippine government not only to invest huge amount of resources in AFF education but also to allow graduates and the Philippine society as a whole to substantially benefit to the return of investment (in form of domestically rendered public social services) as primordial mandated reason of government and goal of household and other stakeholders' investment. Thus, it is suggested that an AFF job market agency be created serving solely as an axillary arm of the government tasked to coordinate and partner with public and private institutions for the generation and provision of immediate job placements and promising employment compensation.

3 To resolve the problems on immediate employment of AFF graduates, it is strongly suggested that entry positions for job applicants should not require the licensure examination eligibility. Instead, this professional eligibility be an indispensable civil service requirement for supervisory, managerial, field designations or national appointments.

4 Conceptualization of programs and projects that are responsive to ergonomics-related transformation of female working environment along with gender and development of graduates of the AFF curricular programs.



It is recommended one of the priority issues and concerns of local and national government in the congressional legislation of social and education reform agenda of the Philippine government.

5 Construction of outcome-based instructional modules designed not only to enhance the AFF students cognitive competence and kinesthetic prowess but also to trigger and develop fully the attributes of the personality endowments of younger AFF students especially:

- vocational or technical skills or competence;
- potential passion for research, arts skills or competitive style in their perception and accomplishment of strategically and technically innovative concept or product presentations; and
- Social responsibility on community development and environmental stewardship through a well-served leadership functions, social-oriented entrepreneurship inclinations, and their sensitivity and sensibility to conform with systematic order, procedural, or acceptable protocols in the AFF professions.

6 A community based outreach program (whose prime stakeholders involved are AFF students' parents) be intensified purposely to promote stronger influence and socio-economic partnership of parents with their children and/or the far-flung agricultural communities with the academe or lead private industries and public government agencies.

7 The predisposition of AFF students in the Philippines confirming among others the information that they enrolled the course s they were heavily influenced by motivation factors and extrinsic influences would suggest that SUCs or HEIs offering the AFF courses (under regulative supervision of the CHED and financially subsidized by the government) be updated regularly of recent information regarding the employability of their students. Thus, indispensable component of HEIs annual report to the Commission on Higher Education is the result of the yearly conducted tracer study on AFF graduates'

8 Lastly, in response to the unanimously identified problems of students in AFF-HEIs in the Philippine particularly along obsolete and limited instructional facilities and equipment, it is suggested that SUCs necessarily:

- intensify the entrepreneurial operation of the Income Generating Project (IGP);
- intensify its track record in AFF-related researches as a way to generate external funds from domestic and international research funding agencies and become recipients of the material assistance;
- inclusion of the budget allocation a priority in the spending of fiduciary funds (raised from tuition and miscellaneous fees); and
- include in the financial management plans the cost-cutting measures purposely to augment GA funds from the national government budget that in turn will strategically make a way for the procurement of the required number of state-of-the-art AFF facilities and equipment.

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