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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### ASSESSMENT OF AGRO-STUDIES INTERNSHIP PROGRAM AT THE LAGUNA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

John Adrian C. Ganibo<sup>1</sup> and Jayson N. Olayta<sup>2</sup>

1. Research Assistant, Agricultural Education Department – College of Agriculture, Laguna State Polytechnic University, Siniloan, Laguna, Philippines 4019.
2. Instructor I, Agricultural Sciences Department, – College of Agriculture, Laguna State Polytechnic University, Siniloan, Laguna, Philippines 4019.

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#### Abstract

Internship is a great opportunity to gain experience in the actual field practice, improving oneself, building acquaintances with other that will provide opportunities for employment and a possibility to land a job after graduation. The purpose of the study is to assess the the Agro-Studies Program in the case of Laguna State Polytechnic University in relation to its effect on socio-economic status of the graduates, employability, personal and professional growth and job satisfaction. On the test of variables undertaken using Minitab software, data revealed that a significant finding were shown. The Agro-studies as international internship program for agriculture students provides great factor in job seeking which is advantage to the students undergo the program.

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#### Introduction:-

Agro-studies is an organization that provides a unique apprenticeship in agriculture, combining advanced studies and hands on **learning by doing** in various fields. It is recognized due to its great impacts of the sustainability advanced agriculture. Agro-studies is a training institution built by each program, which is under the guidance and support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of the Interior. Agro-studies focuses on applicable aspects of modern agriculture as what Israel is known for “world leader” of advancements in Agriculture. Through the process of training foreign people enabling them to be equipped with high knowledgeable and develop potential skills in advancement. Agro-studies collaborate with carefully selected farms across Israel, to ensure each student is nurtured in the most enabling and stimulating learning environment, allowing them to benefit from real exposure to the most advanced agricultural working methods. Agro-studies offers an apprenticeship program that focuses on agriculture capacity building in developing countries. Agro-studies is based in ISRAEL, one of the most advanced technology used in agriculture and it is said to be the promise land of the LORD, (Agro-studies - 2008)

Agro-studies promote food security by empowering students through a creative, dynamic, multicultural program that involves both academic studies and learning by doing, gaining real hands on experience in the field. Agro-studies program exposes students to Israel and to the most advanced commercial farming techniques on handpicked farms throughout the country. Classes are taught once a week on three campuses, one in **Tel-Hai College** in the

**Corresponding Author:- John Adrian C. Ganibo**

Address:- Research Assistant, Agricultural Education Department – College of Agriculture, Laguna State Polytechnic University, Siniloan, Laguna, Philippines 4019.

North, **Ruppin College in the central part** and third in the south at **K'far Silver**. In addition, each group is assigned a tutor who accompanies them throughout their internship, based on their area of study.

Visiting students embark on a once in a life time experience. They are exposed to multiple cultures as they socialize with fellow students from around the world, tour and live in Israel, all the while undergoing an invaluable professional training in the field. Israeli farmers also benefit from hosting the foreign students, and are able to pass on their knowledge and experience in commercial farming. This creates an ongoing and long-lasting effect as knowledge continues to flow and more commercial farming is made possible, leading to greater independence and food security around the world.

Agro-studies was established way back, 2005 wherein thousands of highly skilled and knowledgeable agriculture students are making impacts in developing agriculture in their home countries. Agro-studies was introduced in the Philippines in the year 2007. With the established partnership with Agro-studies, Philippines is one of the most requested country to send agriculture students every year. Students from Philippines dominates the total number of trainees under the program yearly. Philippines are said to be fast learners, which they adapt easily the practices and culture of Israel, satisfying their local sponsor or the farm owners (Tamir, 2017).

Each year a new group of students is invited to Israel for an 11 months agricultural apprenticeship from a variety of developing countries in South East Asia, Africa and South America. Countries participating in our program include the Philippines, Myanmar, Laos, Bhutan and Vietnam from Asia; Rwanda, Togo, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia, Cameroon, Senegal, Kenya and the Ivory Coast from Africa. Recently, it also started working with countries in South America including Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru.

Students are housed either in a Kibbutz (a collective community in which the means of production are communally owned and each member benefits from it all) or a Moshav (a farming village where each family maintains its own household and works on their own land) in rooms that include Wi-Fi. They are equipped with a personal laptop which they are free to take back home and receive complete medical insurance. For five days a week they work on farms where they complete their 'on the job' training. Trainings offered in the following fields: Field Crops, Planting Vegetable and Greenhouse Farming, Fruit Handling and Packing Citrus, Flowers Avocado and Organic Avocado, Hen Coops, Aqua Culture, Poultry Breeding and Production Poultry Vaccinations, Dairy Farms. Students are financially compensated for their work on the farms, and as they have only minimal expenses during their stay in Israel, all funds are a direct investment in the student's future.

In addition to academic courses students participate in a variety of social experiences including field trips throughout Israel. At the end of 11 months apprenticeship interns undergo rigorous testing and after passing their exams they are awarded a Certificate of Graduation in an elegant and formal graduation ceremony. This program has been garnering growing enthusiasm and support from all those involved, and as a result each year a larger number of students is brought to Israel as part of this program. Laguna State Polytechnic University linked Agro-Studies program in the year 2010, where started sending highly qualified students from the university. Yearly, they have been sending students who have undergone process of screening and qualification.

### **Objectives:-**

The study assessed the impact of the Agro-Studies Program in the case of Laguna State Polytechnic University. Specifically, it sought to:

1. Determine the employability of Agro-studies program graduates in terms of:
  1. Employment status;
  2. Employment history;
  3. Nature of work;
2. Determine the socio-economic condition of the Agro-Studies graduates.
3. Determine how Agro-studies program affects the present jobs of its graduates?
4. Determine the perceived impact of Agro-Studies Program Graduates in terms of:
  1. Personality;
  2. Skills;and
  3. Knowledge and Competencies;
5. Determine the significant relationship between the perceived impact of Agro-studies and economic status and job satisfaction?

## Materials and Methods:-

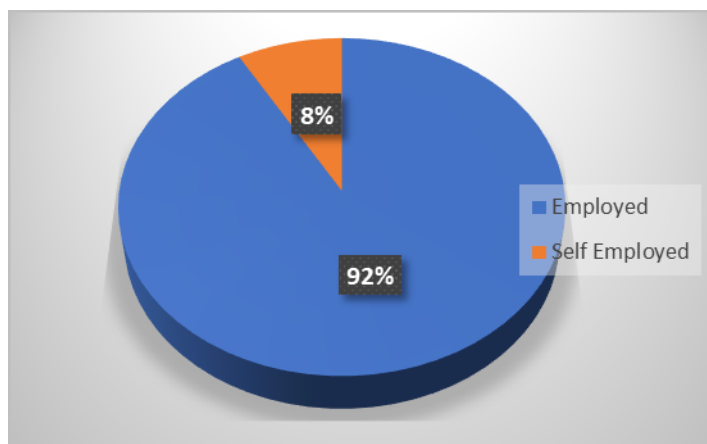
The study utilized descriptive research design that attempts to describe the relationship between the identified variables. Survey thru google forms was used to collect the data from 36 graduates of Agro-Studies program since its acceptance in the Laguna State Polytechnic University from 2011 to 2017. Quantitative data analysis was used to emphasize the objective measurements

Respondents of the study are the graduates of the Agro-studies Program of the Laguna State Polytechnic University - Siniloan (Host) Campus, Los Banos Campus, Nagcarlan Satellite Campus and Magdalena Satellite Campus. Total enumeration was used using the existing data from the Office of the International and Local Affairs of this university. The results were tabulated and statistically analyzed using Minitab Statistics Software.

## Results and Discussions:

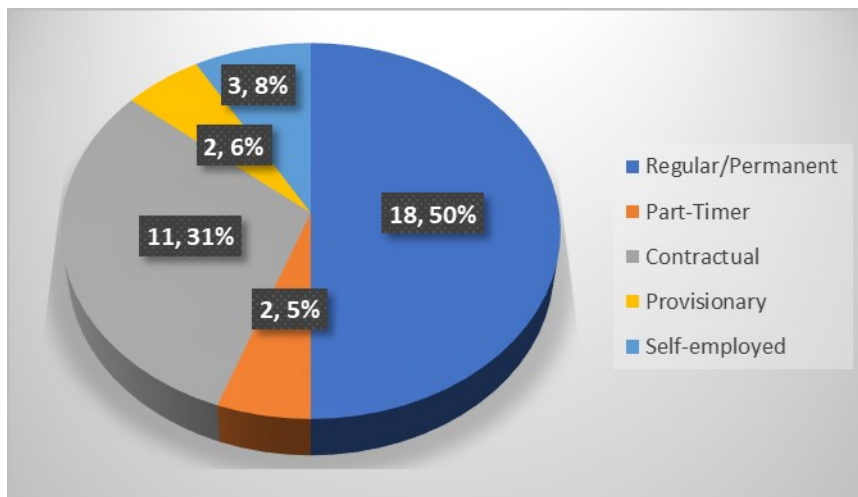
### Employability of Agro-studies graduates:

Data on the status of employment of the Agro-Studies alumni shows that majority (92%) were employed while the other eight percent were self-employed. This implies that students with internship experience in international arena have an advantage in the job market, which can translate into being hired more readily for subsequent jobs as supported with Knouse, Tanner, and Harris (1999).



**Figure 2:-** Distribution of Respondents based from the status of employment.

In relation to data presented in Figure 2, employment-tenure status of Agro-studies graduates shows that fifty percent (50%) were at regular/permanent status. The least number of the respondents were under part-time and probationary status in their respective work assignments. With the experiences gained during the internship in Agro-Studies, professional capacity of students and graduates were enhance resulting to high performance satisfaction supported by Gault et.al (2010). That there are more full- time opportunities for undergraduates with internship experience and high intern performance results during internship period is a big factor for possible hiring requiring skills and knowledge in the subject matter.



**Figure 3:-** Employability-tenure status of Agro-Studies Graduates

Table 1 presents the employment sector corresponding on type of institution in which Agro-Studies graduates are found such as private sector, government, OFW and self-sustaining project. Accordingly, graduates of Agro-Studies easily got their job in the private sector due to their internship experiences. In the government sector, eleven (30.56%) respondents are employed in the government due to their licensed acquired from the Professional Regulations Commissions as licensed agriculturists with regular status. On the other hand, nine (25%) of the respondents pursue their job overseas as OFW; working on the same field/sector - agriculture. As OFW, they tend to acquire new ideas of learning based from international standards and utilized for various purposes. The least number (8.33%) were managing their work on self-sustaining projects/business.

**Table 1:-** Distribution of Employment of Agro-Studies graduates by institution.

Particular	Frequency	Percent
Government	11	30.56
Private	13	36.11
OFW	9	25.00
Self-Sustaining Project	3	8.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 2 shows the classification of work where they are engaged in wherein data revealed that respondents are engaged in agricultural work that includes field work, office work, teaching, OFW and entrepreneurial related to agriculture. On the other hand, two (5.56%) respondents engaged in non-agricultural work. Meanwhile, three (3) of the respondents have the type/nature of work was classified as under small-medium enterprise. Data implies that most of the Agro-studies graduates are engaged in agricultural works and are still practicing what they have acquired from Agro-studies and are in-lined with the degree they took in college. Further, it is a great influence in their choice of work both agricultural and other sector deals in the flexibility in handling the tasks. According to the respondents, it is easy to get a job when you have background and trainings supporting your qualifications for the position.

**Table 2:-** Distribution of respondents based on the classification of job entered.

Particular	Frequency	Percent
Field Work - Agricultural	12	33.33
Office Work - Agricultural	4	11.11
Teaching - Agricultural	1	2.78
OFW -Agricultural	7	19.44
OFW - Non-agricultural	2	5.56
Entrepreneurial - Agricultural	2	5.56
Self-Sustaining Project (SME)	3	8.33
Other Work (machine operator)	5	13.89
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Based from the previous data presented above, Agro-Studies graduates did not experienced difficulties on finding job due to its training backgrounds. This means that this also add up on its qualification over other applicants as supported by Henry (1979) that former interns took less time to attain their first position once employed.

**Table 3:-** Experience in the difficulty in job seeking.

Particular	Frequency	Percent
Do not experienced difficulty in seeking job	33	91.67
Experience difficulty in seeking job	0	0.00
Self-Sustaining Project (SME)	3	8.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.00</b>

#### **Socio-Economic Status of Agro-Studies Graduates:**

Data shows the savings earned by the Agro-studies Graduates after the program wherein forty-one (58.33%) earned P100, 000.00 – P200,000. The next number of respondent whose earning is more than the usual savings of Agro-Studies graduates were P200,000 – P300,000. The range of savings was based in the work load given by the farm. Those who are assigned on dairy, mushrooms, and flower cutting nursery farms are the highest paying jobs.

**Table 7:- Savings Earned after Agro-studies Program.**

Particular	Frequency	Percentage
P100,000 - P200,000	21	58.33
P200,001 - P300,000	3	8.33
P300,001 - P400,000	4	11.11
P400,001 - P500,000	4	11.11
P500,001 - above	4	11.11
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Reflecting on Table 7, with the income earned during the internship program they invested on various investments. Responses shows that Agro-studies graduates were able to build or renovate house with frequency of 21 and 58.33%. This means that money earned coming from their allowances invested wisely on things that provides benefits to their family for economic and social build-up purposes.

**Table 8:- Distribution of Investment of Income earned from internship.**

Particular	Frequency	Percentage
Build/Renovate House	21	58.33
Business	15	41.67
Personal Needs	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Present Job Satisfaction:**

Table 4 shows that the Agro-studies Graduates were highly satisfied with their salary, conducive workplace, in-lined job with degree, colleagues and company policy. Based from the responses of the respondents, it is important that as a worker should happy and enjoying the work load even there is high demand in terms of deadline. Also, is it important that conducive working place and harmonious relationship serve as a factor in finishing the work on time. This was supported by the study of Velina (2011), reported that salaries and other benefits were the reason why graduates are satisfied with their job and stayed.

**Table 4:- Level of job satisfaction in their current job.**

Particular	Mean	Verbal interpretation
1. Salary is at good rate	4.00	Very Satisfied
2. Workplace is conducive	4.30	Highly Satisfied
3. Job is in-lined with Degree	4.52	Highly Satisfied
4. Colleagues are family at work	4.48	Highly Satisfied
5. Company Policy	4.52	Highly Satisfied
<b>General Weighted Average</b>	<b>4.36</b>	<b>Highly Satisfied</b>

Taylor (1988) proves that students who attend internships are more likely to be hired. Looking into a glance on the data in previous figures and tables, employment statues, nature of work and satisfaction on their jobs is resemblance on the duration how the job was acquired. Data revealed that almost months after graduation at LSPU they are employed to their first regular job. Data implies that the Agro-studies graduates were able to find job right after they graduate their bachelor degree as supported by Henry (1979) that former interns took less time to attain their first position.

**Table 5:- Distribution of Duration in Finding Job.**

Particular	Frequency	Percent
less than 3 months	14	38.89
less than 6 months	11	30.56
less than 1 year	7	19.44
Self-sustaining	3	8.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.00</b>

With the present employment status of the respondents, changing jobs can be easily done. As the data revealed, large number of the respondents (36.11%) did not change their jobs since the day they are employed in their respective

company. It is in consonance with their reason why they are staying in their current job which was reported in Table 4. It also shows that Agro-studies graduates had better chance on settling or finding a job that would satisfy their needs. A study made in 1988 proves that students who attend internships are more likely to be satisfied by their job as long as it provides the personal and professional growth to the employees.

**Table 6:-** Frequency of Changing Job.

Particular	Frequency	Percent
not at all	13	36.11
once	8	22.22
twice	9	25.00
more than twice	3	8.33
Self-sustaining project (SME)	3	8.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.00</b>

### **Perceived Impact of Agro-Studies Training in Personality Development, Knowledge, Skills and Competencies:**

Agro-Studies program has a wide range effect on how they got their job because of good credentials which fits to the need of the industry. The training focused on agricultural technologies greatly impact to in-depth knowledge in its application through the principles behind the success of agriculture sector which brought certain ideas that can be utilized in the country. Agro-Studies Program also focuses on character development. Trainings undertaken have developed its character towards work place, socialization and confidence in doing tasks. It is evidently shown that those who are working are promoted to their work due to its significant contribution in the company/institution.

Competencies have been enhanced through Agro-Studies training which has been observed to the graduates. According Commissioner DelasLlagas, it is deemed necessary to send students from different SUC's to enhance their competencies and to gain ideas and innovations which can be used in the Philippines.

**Table 7:-** Perceived impact of Agro-Studies training in terms of personality, knowledge, skills and competencies.

Particular	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Personal	3.15	Average Impact
Knowledge and Skills	3.79	High Impact
Competency	4.66	Very High Impact
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.87</b>	<b>High Impact</b>

Table 8 reveals that there is a significant relationship between the perceived impact of Agro-studies Graduates towards the academic performance, level of competencies, the skills and knowledge, economic status and job satisfaction of the Agro-studies Graduates as proved by their p-value that are lesser than 0.05 and 0.01 significance level. This further implies that the impacts of Agro-studies program have great effect on the Agro-studies Graduates' life. There are more full- time opportunities for undergraduates with internship experience (Gault, Leach, Duey - 2010).

In terms of level of competencies and knowledge and skills, result shows highly significant as to its impact. This means that graduates had acquired in-depth knowledge in various aspect specially in improving its academic standing. On the other hand, significant relationship between the perceived impact and economic and job satisfaction was recorded. This is due to its contribution to job related and personal investments as shown in previous discussions.

Data implies that Agro-Studies contributes in the socio-economic status of its recipients. Also, this was an avenue to LSPU in developing a responsive curricular offering that suits the international standard of developing manpower.

**Table 8:-** Relationship between perceived impact of Agro-Studies Graduates to Level of Competencies and Skills, Economic Status and Job satisfaction.

Variables tested for Relationship	p-value	Interpretation
Level of Competencies	0.0002	Highly Significant

Knowledge and Skills	0.0000	Highly Significant
Economic Status	0.0344	Significant
Job Satisfaction	0.0169	Significant

### Conclusions:-

Agro-studies Internship Program benefited its graduates on their socio-economic status, employment, job satisfaction and perceived impacts as to their personality and professional development, knowledge and work skills. The international internship program provides great factor in job seeking which is advantage to the students undergo the program. However, further studies is recommended pertaining to policy review, implementation process and return service to the recipient university in the country.

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