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Regular Farm Family Visits as an Approach to Community Engagement and Learning in Agricultural Higher Education: A Sri Lankan Experience

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Abstract

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the regular farm family visits by undergraduate students of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya in Sri Lanka as a community engagement and learning approach. Data was collected using a questionnaire survey with the students (N = 145) and structured interviews with the host farm families (N = 40). The journals submitted by students on their learning experience were also examined as a qualitative measure. According to the results of the study, farm families have served as a "social laboratory" for the students, and both students and the community have benefited. Elements of community-based learning, experiential learning, service-learning, and problem-based learning were identified as the embedded characteristics of this learning approach. Identifying strengths and limitations would be important to improve this pedagogical method of community engagement and learning in agricultural higher education.

Keywords: community-based learning, community engagement, agricultural higher education, host community, university–community partnership

Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya is the pioneer in agricultural higher education in Sri Lanka. It was established in 1948. The university offers a degree of bachelor of science (B.Sc.) in agricultural technology and management, along with other two degrees: B.Sc. in food science and technology and B.Sc. in animal science and fisheries. Peradeniya is a suburban area of the Kandy district in the central hills of the country, an area that belongs to the wet zone of Sri Lanka. Food crop production, including the staple food (rice), is less prominent in the wet zone than in the dry zone. Consequently, the surrounding community of the university (main campus) is not an agricultural community. Therefore, a Sub Campus of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya, was established in 1968 in a remote agricultural area called Mahailuppallama, which belongs to the Anuradhapura district of the dry zone of Sri Lanka. This location is about 80 miles away from the main campus at Peradeniya (Figure 1).

Students who follow the Bachelor of Science degree program in agricultural technology and management at the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya are required to complete a residential practical training for 16 weeks at the Mahailuppallama Sub Campus during their first year. The main purpose of this residential training is to provide opportunities for the students to gain hands-on experience in the subjects they study. It also lays the foundation for learning agriculture and allied subjects during the next three and half years of their degree program offered at the main campus at Peradeniya. Currently, the academic program at the Sub Campus consists of seven courses of study: Crop

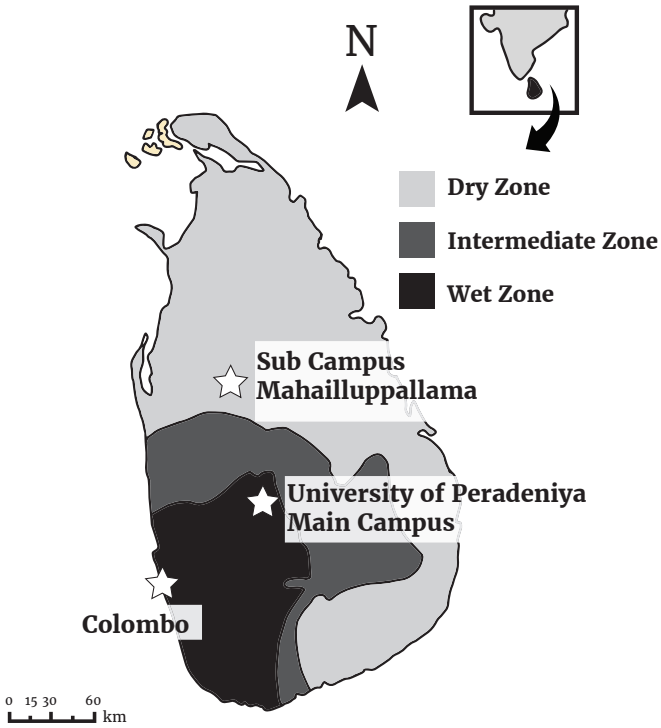

Figure 1. Geographical Locations of the Main Campus at Peradeniya and Sub Campus at Mahailuppallama

Production Technologies, Soil Resources and Ecosystems, Applied Agribusiness, Field Engineering, Developmental Extension, Principles and Practices of Animal Production, and Botany of Field Crops. These courses are offered by the respective seven academic departments of the faculty. The practical crop production program is designed to give the students hands-on experience in all agronomic practices for a variety of crops, from land preparation to harvesting.

Sri Lanka is divided into three main agro-ecological zones: the wet zone, the intermediate zone, and the dry zone (Figure 1). However, two thirds of the land extent of Sri Lanka belongs to the dry zone, having agro-climatic conditions suitable for food crop production. Therefore, the Sub Campus is located in an ideal place to provide the undergraduates with essential practical skills for dry zone agriculture. More important, opportunities are available for students to build close connections with the nearby farming community and agriculture-related government institutions such as the Field Crop Research and Development Centre, Farm Mechanization Centre, In-service Training Institute, Block Management Office of the Mahaweli irrigation system, Government Seed Farm, and the Institute of Post-Harvest Technology. The students are expected to have a good rapport with the farm families and study the farm family and their farming throughout the season, paying frequent visits and making close observations.

Having real-world experience beyond the classroom settings is an important component of the higher educational learning process. Community-based learning (Melaville et al., 2006), experiential learning (Andreasen, 2004), service-learning (Astin et al., 2000), and problem-based learning (Hung et al., 2008) are some examples of pedagogical leaning techniques that are being used in a wide variety of education contexts. Kolb (1984) defined experiential learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 41). Experiential learning approaches have been identified as a successful strategy to teach agriculture across the literature (Baker et al., 2012; Edziwa et al., 2012). Even though teaching and research are considered traditional roles of higher education institutions, higher education institutions around the globe have

embedded a third component called outreach into their curricula. Outreach engagement is mandatory for agricultural higher education institutions (Hansen, 1989) that could enhance their curricula through the application of learning concepts and theories like community-based learning, service-learning, problem-based learning, and experiential learning while providing opportunities for students to achieve their expected levels of competencies. The University Grant Commission of Sri Lanka has also identified outreach as a mandate for Sri Lankan state universities. Moreover, community engagement, consultancy, and outreach activities have been included as part of the evaluation criteria in reviewing for quality of higher education institutions in Sri Lanka (Warnasuriya et al., 2015). The Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya has attempted to design its curriculum in a way that provides maximum learning opportunities for students in various ways throughout the degree program, including giving opportunities for community and outreach engagement to improve their knowledge, skills, and attitudes as determined by the expected graduate profiles. The Mahailuppallama Sub Campus of the faculty provides ample opportunities for first-year undergraduate students for community engagement, especially with the rural farming community.

Beyond the technical knowledge of agriculture as a science and an industry, an aspiring agricultural professional must be competent and understanding about community interactions, social dynamics, social stratifications, social class, norms, values, beliefs, social change, and culture. Therefore, the Faculty of Agriculture has identified the need to expose students to real-world experiences and community engagements throughout the degree program at different levels. The farm family visits program is one of the mandatory components of the practical residential training for first-year undergraduate students at the Mahailuppallama Sub Campus.

Understanding and liaising with the rural community is one of the expected outcomes of the course Developmental Extension. Therefore, as one of the practical components of this subject, students are formed into groups of four or five, and each group is sent out to a farming family in the surrounding area during the 16 weeks of residential training at Mahailuppallama Sub Campus. Forty host farm families participate in the program each year. The host families are contacted through the three community-based farmer organizations in the area, and they voluntarily participate in the activity. Host families have the freedom to continue or discontinue at any time. However, most of the families show their willingness to continue the participation each year. The host families are selected on the basis of farming involvement and their willingness to participate voluntarily. The students are expected to study the assigned farm families and build a good rapport with them by paying frequent visits throughout the semester. Although making this close connection with the farm families is one of the practical components of Developmental Extension, this opportunity is used for community-based learning components of other subjects offered at the Mahailuppallama Sub Campus. This partnership provides the opportunity for not only students but also academic staff members to interact with the community.

Objectives of this community-based learning component of Developmental Extension are clearly defined. At the end of the practical component, students should be able to (1) identify the structure of the farm family and the types of income-earning activities they are involved in, (2) recognize the major requirements for successful farming, (3) identify the types of opportunities and facilities made available for the farmers by governmental, nongovernmental, and private sector organizations, (4) understand the time budget of the farm family (to look at the farm family from gender perspectives), (5) understand social obligations of the farm family, (6) be aware of the farm family's changing needs and aspirations, and (7) appreciate the culture, diversity of work, and types of decisions that farmers have to make. Students are encouraged to build close connections with their assigned farm family and the community by making frequent visits and engaging with their agricultural and community activities where possible. Students are expected to participate in at least one farming activity, such as land preparation, seeding, planting, fertilization, weeding, harvesting, or sorting/grading. As the final outcome of this practical component, the students are required to maintain a journal regarding their learning experiences. At the end of the semester, the students organize a farmer day within the Sub Campus for the mutual benefit of

the community members and the students. Individual host families are invited by the students, and the community at large is invited through a poster campaign and public announcements. Invitation letters are also sent to local schools to invite schoolchildren who are studying agriculture. Resource persons from the nearby government agricultural organizations also participate in the event.

Various opportunities for student interactions with the nearby farming community have been available from the inception of the Mahailuppallama Sub Campus. However, this university–community partnership has not yet been analyzed, evaluated, reported, or documented in detail.

Objectives

The general objective of this study was to describe and document the university–community partnership of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. The specific objectives were (1) to determine the students' level of interest toward the farm family visits, (2) to determine the level of satisfaction of students and their assigned families, (3) to identify the problems and limitations faced by the students and host farm families, and (4) to make recommendations for improvements and sustainability.

Theoretical Framework

David Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning was used as the theoretical framework for this study. Kolb's experiential learning cycle works on two levels: a four-stage cycle of learning and four learning styles. The learner's internal cognition process is the main concern of this theory. According to Kolb, abstract concepts can be flexibly applied to different situations. New experiences are transformed to create knowledge. The experiential learning cycle has four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. When the learner experiences something new or reinterprets an existing experience, it is a concrete experience. Visiting farm families and meeting with farmers was a new experience for undergraduate students and thus can be interpreted as a concrete experience. The next stage of the experiential learning cycle is the process of reflecting on the experience in the first stage. Maintenance of a reflective journal throughout the farm family visits in which students reflect on the new experiences constitutes this stage. The summary of the reflections helps the students conceptualize their reflections and progress to the third experiential learning stage, abstract conceptualization. The final stage of experiential learning, active experimentation, was also put into practice. Through their experience of close engagement with the farm families and the community, the students are able to identify training and information that will benefit the farmers. To address these needs, the students organize and conduct a farmer day for the community. This is a kind of service provided by the student (university) to the community. Therefore, this activity has some service-learning characteristics—that is, it connects service to a learning experience. Figure 2 summarizes the university–community interactions and the benefits to both students (university) and the community through the reciprocal relationship (partnership).

Methodology

A mixed-methods design was used to meet the purpose of this study. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Both the host farm families and the students were considered for the study. A questionnaire survey was conducted to collect data from the students (N = 145). The questionnaire had three main sections: (1) background information (gender; urban, semi urban, or rural area of living; occupation of parents); (2) past experience (subjects followed for the university entrance exam, past experience in agriculture and community work); (3) farm family visits (number of home/farm visits, activities, importance of the visits, satisfaction about the activity, support extended by host families, limitations/problems faced, and suggestions for improvements). Meantime, face-to-face interviews were performed with all farm families (N = 40) who participated in this activity as the host community. Perceived importance/benefit of this activity for the two parties (students and host families) was measured by taking responses from the host families for four statements as (1) important for students only, (2) important for both the host families and students, (3) not important for both students and host families, and (4) neutral. A five-point

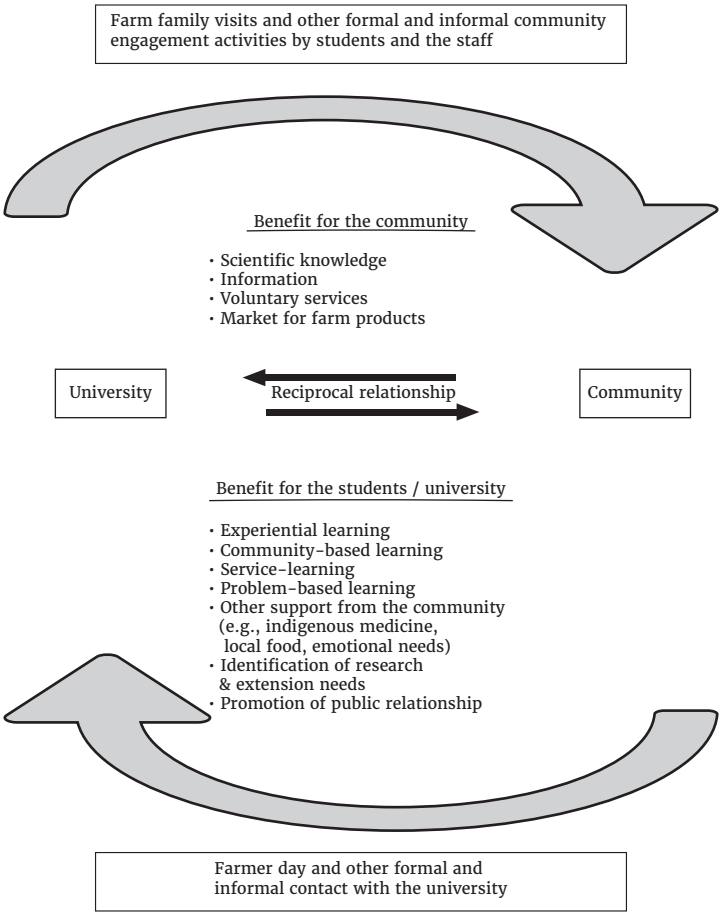

Figure 2. University–Community Interactions and the Benefits to Students, University, and Community

Likert scale (*like very much, like moderately, like a little, neutral, not like at all*) was used to measure the response (liking) of the host farm families toward the activity. The questionnaire or interview concluded with an open-ended question asking for suggestions to improve this activity. As qualitative data, the students' journals were analyzed for the experience of the students. Students had expressed their views on the activity using preface, conclusion, and recommendation sections. Farm families were introduced to the students during the first week of the semester. Guidelines for the study were given at the beginning. However, instructions were provided continuously throughout the semester about general conduct, and theoretical concepts (social class, caste, social structure, kingship, norms, beliefs, social mobility, social change, etc.) were explained during the classroom lectures. Teaching and learning was connected to the farm families and the community by taking examples from the community and by brainstorming. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Basically, the results were explained using descriptive statistics, and qualitative data were summarized and reported.

Students' learning was assessed in three different ways. Mainly, students were asked to prepare a journal on their learning, which was assigned 10% of the final practical grade. Second, an oral examination was held to assess the learning from all seven practical assignments in the Developmental Extension class, including the farm family visits. Students were asked to bring their journal for the oral examination. A panel of judges evaluated their learning during farm family visits. Third, questions were included in the written exam. The journals were also used to examine the experience and learning of the students.

Students were asked to concentrate on

multiple topics during their farm family visits and address these in their journals to be submitted at the end of the semester. Twelve topics were required: (1) history of the village; (2) farm family: structure, age, gender, education level, occupations, living status, and so on; (3) farm enterprise: types of economic activities undertaken, land use pattern, land ownership, labor management for different farming activities, availability and use of farm inputs, production, income, expenses, and savings; (4) farmer's social background: norms, values, customs and traditions, and related cultural background; (5) types of social organizations that the family associates with; (6) time budget of the farm family (gender budgeting); (7) public and private agricultural service organizations the family has contacts with; (8) social obligations; (9) challenges and opportunities faced by the farm family when managing the farm; (10) problems and limitations that the family experiences; (11) attitudes and aspirations of the family members; and (12) changing lifestyles of farmers.

Results and Discussion

Background of the Students

Among the respondents, the majority were female (60%) and the rest (40%) were male. Students represented 24 administrative districts out of 25 districts in Sri Lanka. A majority of the students (52%) were from semiurban areas of the country, whereas 29% were from urban areas. Only 19% of the students were from rural areas of the country (Figure 3). Since agriculture is not very prominent in urban and semiurban areas of the country, it was assumed that a majority of the respondents considered for this study did not have a background and experience in agriculture.

Students were asked whether they had any kind of experience in farming before joining the university. A majority of the students (70%) did not have any farming experience, highlighting the importance of the residential crop production program at Mahailuppallama Sub Campus as well as the farm family visits.

Background of the Farming Community and the Farmers

Mahailuppallama is located in Anuradhapura district of the North Central Province of Sri Lanka, which belongs to the dry zone (Figure 1). However, Mahailuppallama is a block of the Mahaweli System H; it receives irrigation water for cultivation from the largest irrigation development project in Sri Lanka, which is based on the Mahaweli River. Therefore, the two nearby villages selected to connect with host farm families were irrigation settlements. Presently, third and fourth generations of the settlers are living in the area.

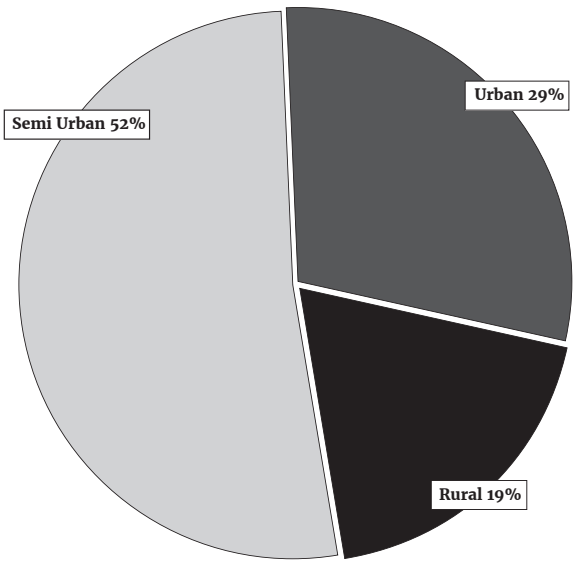

Figure 3. Nature of the Students' Hometown (Rural, Urban, Semiurban)

Farm families were located 2–3 miles from the Sub Campus. Among the total of 40 host farm families, 30 famers were full-time farmers, and 10 farmers were part-time farmers who were also engaged in income-generating activities other than farming. A majority of the household heads were males (33), and there were seven female-headed farm families. Figure 4 shows the age distribution of the farmers, indicating that the majority of the farmers were in the age category 51–60 years.

Time Spent on Farm Family Visits and Involvement with the Farm Family

According to the theory of involvement (Astin, 1984), the extent to which students can achieve particular developmental goals is a direct function of the time and effort they devote to activities designed to achieve the goals. In the present study, time and effort taken in farm family visits were encountered as the involvement. Number of farm family visits and types of activities accomplished were explored as the measurement of involvement. The students were encouraged and motivated by the respective academic staff to visit the farm families throughout the semester, especially covering the different crop growth stages of the farmers' fields. About 81% of the students were engaged in farming-related activities, such as land preparation, planting, weeding, fertilizer and agrochemical application, and harvesting and grading of farm products with their assigned farm families. However, 19% of the students had not joined the farming activities with the farm families. Students attributed their lack of involvement to difficulties in coordinating the time of the families' farming activities with the students' available free time.

Preference of the Students for Farm Family Visits Relative to Other Assignments

Seven practical assignments have been allocated for the course Developmental Extension (EX1101) offered at the Sub Campus. Students need to visit three nearby government institutes related to agricultural development of the region/country: the In-service Training Institute (IsTI), Agrarian Service Centre (ASC), and the Institute of Post-Harvest Technology (IPHT) to study the organizational structure, service provided, and other important aspects. Students also need to study a community-based organization (CbO) in the area and the Participatory Irrigation Management System (PIMS) for irrigation water management. As their final practical assignment for the Developmental Extension course, students are supposed to conduct a farmer day on the Sub Campus premises; this activity is aimed at the nearby farming community and schoolchildren. Students were asked to rank the seven practical assignments according to their preference. Figure 5 shows the ranked preferences of the students.

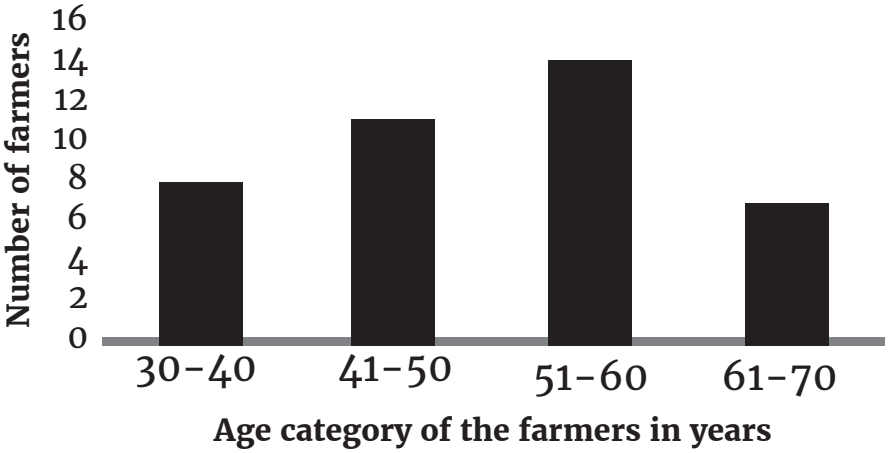

Figure 4. Age Category of the Farm Family Heads in Years

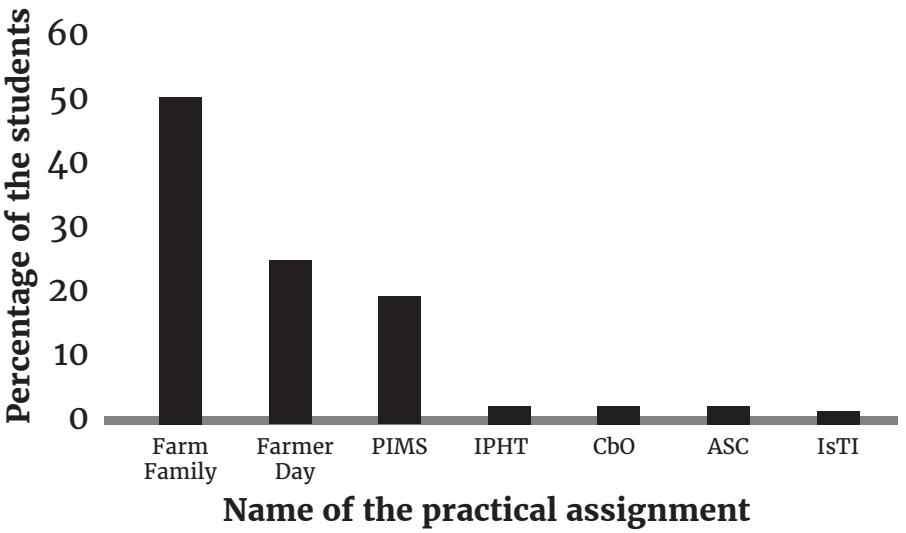

Figure 5. Students' Ranked Preferences for the Practical Assignments

Out of the seven practical assignments allocated for EX1101, farm family visits were ranked as the first preference by 50% of the students. Only 1% of the students ranked them as the least preferred assignment. Accordingly, farm family visit was the mostly preferred practical by a majority of the students. Farmer day was the second most preferred practical among the students. These results also revealed that students mostly preferred community-based engagements and activities over the organizational visits (IsTI, IPHT, ASC, and CbO). It is possible to assume that students are more interested in engaging with the community and that they learn more when the learning is interesting.

Level of Satisfaction With Farm Family Visits

When the students were asked to rank the level of satisfaction regarding this community-based learning activity, about 59% of students gave the ranking *highly satisfied*, followed by 39% and 2% with the rankings *satisfied* and *neutral*, respectively. None of the respondents gave a response of *dissatisfied* with this learning activity.

Level of Support From Host Families

About 59% of the students stated that their host family was "highly supportive," and about 31% rated their host family "supportive" (Figure 6). These responses indicate that most selected host families extended their support to the students in this activity, which was an important factor in its success.

When the students were asked about their intention to continue the relationship with their host families after they left the Sub Campus, about 92% of students stated that they would continue the relationship with their host families. It has been observed that the students visit their host farm families even after they have graduated. Also, according to the discussions with the farm families, they have benefited in different ways through the long-term relationship with the students. Specifically, they stay in contact with the students via telephone and seek assistance sometimes. For instance, they ask for assistance and information regarding their children's education and farming problems they face. Such ongoing interactions can be attributed to the close relationship, mutual support, and trust developed during the farm family visits. Therefore, it can be stated that this university–community interaction opened up opportunities for both community members and students for networking and thereby improved participants' social capital.

Level of Importance Associated With Farm Family Visits

The majority of the respondents perceived this community-based learning experience as very important (67%) or important (32%). The rest (1%) rated the experience

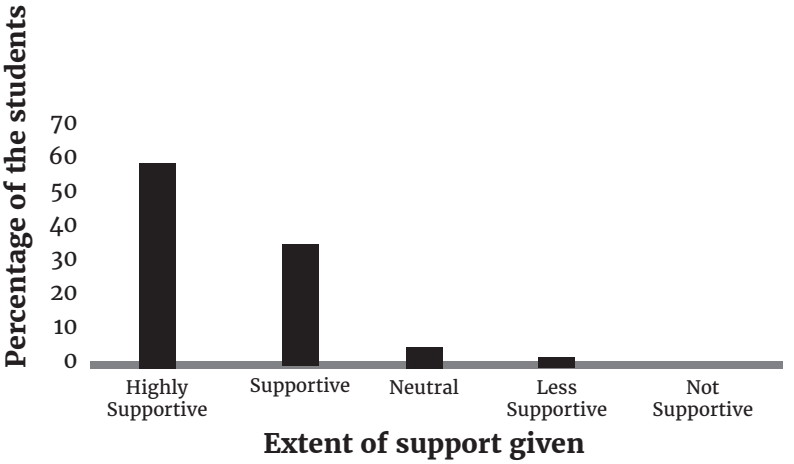

Figure 6. Level of Support From Host Families

neutral. A move from teaching in the classroom to a community-based learning style has profound implications. Table 1 shows some of the comments in the reflective journals submitted by students that reflect the importance of academic, social, and emotional learning aspects of this community-based learning activity.

Several students expressed their satisfaction regarding the study family visits in their journal, referring to the farm family as a "home away from home." The intimate and informal connections to the farm family accommodated social and emotional needs of the students, which provided a favorable psychological condition when they were learning residentially in a remote area away from their own families. This is especially important for the first-year students since staying in a remote area away from their families was a first-time experience for a majority of the students.

Benefit for the Community

Clearly, students get an important opportunity to have close interactions with the rural farming community and learn through that experience. However, the community also benefited from this activity both directly and indirectly. Students usually share the scientific knowledge they gain from the university with farmers while they learn from the experience of the farmers. Also, students seek the assistance of the university staff to assist farmers with some problems. For instance, sometimes students bring live plant specimens to the university to identify pest and disease problems of the crops. Farmers get another opportunity to sell their farm products to the university students through the relationship they build through the farm family visits. In each year, students form food groups to get their food. Usually they visit an economic center established near the Sub Campus to

Table 1. Selected Comments in Students' Reflective Journals

"Our farm family was a home away from home"
"Really enjoyed while learning through experience"
"I learned to respect culture and traditions of the farmers"
"A great opportunity to study the life of a rural farmer"
"An unforgettable and worthwhile experience in my life"
"Our farm family considered us as the members of their family"
"An opportunity for me to smell the essence of the dry zone farmer and the farming"
"Helpful to understand the application of theories learned in the classroom settings"

buy vegetables, fruits, and more to meet their food requirements. However, they also buy some vegetables, fruits, rice, coconut, and other products from the community. Specifically, they buy some underutilized uncommon vegetables (leafy vegetables, jackfruit) and tank (inland) fish from the community. However, such purchases are not always possible due to limited quantity being available and also due to inability to provide a continuous supply. Students also have participated in *shramadana* campaigns (volunteer work) in the village to clean the irrigation channels. This is a service to the community that also helps students grow as responsible citizens. Students also provided free teaching assistance to the children of the farm families. In addition, some students voluntarily worked in the Sunday school of the village temple. Moreover, the farmer day conducted on the university premises is another benefit to the farmers and the community in general.

Farmer Day

Students organize a "farmer day" as one of the assignments of the practical component of Developmental Extension. It is conducted at the end of the semester on the university premises aiming to benefit the host farm families and other farmers in the area and students of schools who are studying agriculture. The crop grown by students and different agronomic practices were used as demonstration plots. Research officers of the nearby Field Crop Research and Development Institute and agriculture officers of the Department of Agriculture were invited to support the farmer day as technical experts. Students invite the host farm families for the farmer day. According to the results of the present study, 77% of the host farm families had participated in the farmer day. Host families' farming problems and their training needs were considered during the training need assessment and planning for the farmer day; the event provided an opportunity for problem-based learning and experience sharing for both students and the staff. It also is an opportunity for students to practice agricultural extension while providing a service to the community, aligning with the concept of service-learning. The outreach or extension tasks of an agricultural university refer to the more direct contribution of higher agricultural education to agricultural and rural development (Bor et al., 1989). Accordingly, this community engagement contributes to rural agricultural development as well.

Factors That Influence Effectiveness and Success of the Farm Family Visits

Time of day and distance to farm families were identified as the most influential factors when the respondents were asked to mention the factors that influence the effectiveness of farm family visits. Students were supposed to visit their farm families during evenings, weekends, and public holidays. Push bicycles were the means of transport. Students have mentioned that it was not possible for them to visit the farms and engage in farming activities in the evenings. Moreover, some students do not stay at the hostel during weekends and public holidays since they go back to their residential homes. Although the host families were selected from nearby villages, the frequency of students' visits to the farm families in the very close vicinity was comparatively high. In the reflective journals that the respondents were supposed to maintain, they have mentioned these hands-on activities as helpful for understanding the practical application of theories they learned in classroom settings.

The rural community in Sri Lanka places a high value and respect toward the university students. Their cultural generosity and hospitality are some other reasons behind the success of this initiative. In its World Giving Index, Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) ranked Sri Lanka in eighth place in 2015 (CAF, 2015) and ninth place in 2019 (CAF, 2019), which gives an indication of the generosity of the country. All students received refreshments and even lunch and dinner from their host family while gradually building a close relationship. Furthermore, all student groups had given some gifts to their farm family at their own cost when visiting and at the end of the course. In general, rural people are reluctant to disclose their lives, including farming and related practices. Therefore, the close relationship and trust built with the host family help students to explore the real farmer and farming.

Examples were taken from the community and related to classroom learning whenever possible. Students mentioned in their reflective journals that the continuous support and regular monitoring of the staff were helpful.

Suggestions of the Students for Improving Farm Family Visits

Students were asked for suggestions as an open-ended question on the questionnaire. Seventy percent (70%) of the respondents offered suggestions for improvements. Presently, the course timetable allocates time (4 hours) only for student groups' first visit to the farm families. No other specific time has been allocated in the course schedule for students to visit farm families. Students visited their farm families and farms during evenings, weekends, and public holidays. When asked about their suggestions for improving farm family visits, about 23% of the students highlighted the importance of allocating a specific time in the course schedule to make the visits more interactive and experiential. Unfortunately, there are limitations on allocating more time within the available timetable. However, it may be possible to allocate some independent learning hours in the timetable to this activity.

In addition to the agriculture-related activities, students provided other, indirect services to their host families. For instance, students have shared their knowledge and experiences with the children of farm families, supporting them in their school education. Some children received learning resources like books and writing materials from university students. On the other hand, the farm families visited the university for the cultural show and religious events conducted by the students, strengthening mutual understanding, coexistence, and their relationship. Therefore, it was revealed that this learning initiative opened avenues for students to perform some civic responsibilities while learning. Also, the students had engaged with cultural and religious events of their farm families and the village, which helped them in sociocultural understanding.

In agriculture education, "wholeness" of a system (e.g., the agricultural environment as a whole) should be studied (Blum, 1996). The idea is that parts cannot be fully understood without looking at the whole or viewing the system holistically. Although this community engagement was initiated for the course Developmental Extension, this linkage with farming families created an opportunity for students to utilize the knowledge they gained in other courses, such as Field Engineering, Crop Production Technologies, and Applied Agribusiness, to gain a holistic understanding of the "farmer" and "farming."

Conclusions and Recommendations

The farming community near the campus has served as a "social laboratory" for the students. Results of this study indicated that both the students and the host families were interested and valued this activity. This community engagement activity provides a valuable opportunity for students to experience community-based learning, experiential learning, and problem-based learning, as well as having service-learning characteristics.

Based on the interest, perceived benefits, and positive effects to both students and the host families and the community, the regular farm family visit approach can be recommended for other agricultural higher educational institutions with similar backgrounds. Possible improvements and changes should be performed depending on the context. It is important to integrate the appropriate components of other subjects taught in the degree program with the farm family visits in order to provide a holistic learning opportunity for students. Reasonable time should be allocated from the course schedule to visit the farm families. To sustain the activity in the long run, there should be an adequate mechanism to cover the host farm families' opportunity cost and to show appreciation for their service provided. Students should be encouraged to engage with more farming practices of the host family to learn by doing and as a service to them. Peer learning and sharing the experience among the students is also recommended. Further strategies should be developed to mutually benefit the students, host farm families, and their community to support long-term existence of this kind of community-based learning initiative. Based on the findings, this community-based learning approach can be recommended for similar kinds of teaching and learning contexts and environments in this region and throughout the world.

Note

Institutional approval was not required to conduct the study and publish the results.

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