

# Empowering Rural Community of Laguna for Maximum Societal Impact through Skills Acquisition

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## Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the level to which rural community are empowered through skill acquisition programs. Objectively, this study intended to: 1.) describe the present socio-economic characteristics of rural community of Laguna, 2.) examine the available skills acquired by rural community, 3.) investigate the skills acquisition that will be needed for their empowerment, 4.) determine the relevancy of skills acquisition for self-reliance among the rural community, and 5.) ascertain the factors discouraging/hindering rural community from participating in skill acquisition program. This paper measures the social and economic impact of training and skills development on rural community who participated in training provided by social purpose. An implicit policy assumption is that such organizations will be contributed to social and economic regeneration. Examining the costs and benefits of training to trainees. The results may demonstrate that while changes to both the economic and social well-being of trainees may occur. Furthermore, social purpose needed to be demonstrated the socioeconomic benefits of their training programs to secure future funding, public or private, but proving their successful delivery even if it may be difficult to determine.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Rural Community, Societal Impact, Skill Acquisition, Socio-economic

## Introduction

Acquisition of skills could be seen as an aspect of training, since education in our traditional system is the cultural transmission of knowledge from the older ones in the society to the younger ones. According to Bolt-Lee (2013), skill is the art of possessing the ability to have power, authority or competency to do the task required of an individual on the job. Skills are not persons' fundamental, innate capacities but must be developed through training, practice, and experience. It is the process of acquiring or gaining effective and ready knowledge in developing ones' aptitude and ability in particular field, (Ezeani,2012).

In many Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), activities done by the Extension and Services of Laguna State Polytechnic University, within the different municipalities of Laguna particularly District IV-4A, it was further requested for them to help actualize their skills in the rural areas in different municipalities, particularly in:1.) computer literacy and repair for training youths especially graduates at no cost since computer literacy skills has become prerequisite for employment in the work place, 2.) orientation on proper waste management / disposal items and other household materials that could be sold to raise money in support of training rural community for skill acquisition, 3.) continuous education when calamity and

disaster hits the place and most of the individuals are in the evacuation centers,4.) new technology that could help them in faster production of crops/agricultural technology,5. ) entrepreneurial skills, etc.

Poverty and its symptoms become a dominant feature, if unemployment and the increase in anti-social vices like drug addiction, kidnapping, lack of marketable skills and the like will take place, (Echebiri,2015). On the level of the Universities along the area of this rural communities, who offers skills training and technology transfer with the rural communities, particularly that of LSPU, questions are: Does the actual skills with the rural individuals have been developed and empowered? Have these programs provided the type of skills needed by these rural community and in their own view? What were the modalities for effective implementation acquisition programs? In an attempt to provide these questions, this study strives to find out the extent of skills acquisition for self-reliance and rural youth empowerment.

**Methodology**

This study employed descriptive survey design. The respondents comprise of seven (7) municipalities of Laguna in District IV-4A, where LSPU initially have Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in conducting extension programs. The data was collected by means of research constructed survey-questionnaires titled, “Skills Acquisition Questionnaires for Rural Community of Laguna”. This instrument was used objectively to elicit opinions from the respondents on the following: Available skills acquired by individuals, skills needed by community, the relevancy of skills acquisition for self-reliance and the impeding challenges for skills acquisition implementation. The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation by expert. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha. The researcher administered the questionnaires together with the extension chairperson and coordinators of the different colleges of the university.

**Results and Discussion**

**Table 1. Present Socio-Economic Condition of Rural Community in Laguna**

Variable	No. Respondents for Upland Area (N=349)	Percentage	No. Respondents for Lowland Area (N=333)	Percentage
<b>Sex:</b>				
Male	140	40.11	137	41.14
Female	209	59.89	196	58.86
<b>Marital Status:</b>				
Single	220	63.03	119	35.73
Married	108	30.95	198	59.46
Widowed	19	5.44	11	3.31
Divorced	-	0.00	-	0.00
Separated	2	0.58	5	1.50
<b>Educational Attainment:</b>				
Non-Formal Education	-	-	-	-
Primary Education	56	16.04	78	23.34
Secondary Education	172	49.29	129	38.73
Tertiary Education	121	34.67	126	37.83

<b>Income Earn per Month:</b>				
None	29	8.31	57	17.12
1000-5000	17	4.87	9	2.70
5000-10,000	112	32.09	102	30.63
10,000-20,000	95	27.22	65	19.52
20,000-100,000	96	27.51	100	30.03
Others	-	-	-	-
<b>Source of Income:</b>				
Employed	150	42.98	168	50.45
Self-Employed	35	10.03	88	26.43
Unemployed	164	46.99	77	23.12
Others	-	-	-	-
<b>Affiliation/Organization:</b>				
Political	114	32.66	89	26.74
Religious	76	21.78	107	32.13
Cultural	28	8.02	30	9.00
Professional	47	13.47	35	10.51
Social	84	24.07	72	21.62
Others	-	-	-	-

Legend:  $X_1$ = Upland Area,  $X_2$ = Lowland Area

It is imperative to investigate the present socio-economic characteristics of rural community in Laguna. the findings will help in addressing the issues about the rural community and the way they perceive skill acquisition programs. Table 1 shows that out of 349 respondents from the upland area, 140 are males and 209 are females, for the lowland are a total of 333 respondents, 137 are males and 196 are females. On marital status, ( $X_1=63.03\%$ ,  $X_2=35.03\%$ ) were single, ( $X_1=30.95\%$ ,  $X_2=59.46\%$ ), were married, ( $X_1=5.44\%$ ,  $X_2=3.31\%$ ), were widowed. Others were separated ( $X_1=0.58\%$ ,  $X_2=1.50\%$ ). While none of the respondents are divorced in term of their marital status is concern. In analyzing their educational attainment, it was found out that none of the respondents had a non-formal education while, primary, secondary and tertiary education were scored as ( $X_1=16.04\%$ ,  $X_2=23.34\%$ ), ( $X_1=49.29\%$ ,  $X_2=38.73\%$ ), ( $X_1=34.67\%$ ,  $X_2=37.83\%$ ) respectively. The income earned per month analysis was significantly discouraging as there are rural community found not earning ( $X_1=8.31\%$ ,  $X_2=17.12\%$ ). Others earn P20,000 and below with ( $X_1=4.87\%$ ,  $X_2=2.70\%$ ), while ( $X_1=27.51\%$ ,  $X_2=30.03\%$ ) struggles to earn P20,000 and above monthly.

On the interview with some of the respondents reveals that this increment in the number of employed was a result of recruitment from the private companies outside the community. More so, the difference in the responses of the upland area community and those on the lowland could be as a result of the fact that lowland area is densely characterized with small and medium enterprises within the vicinity which might be the reason and chances of employment to reduce the level of unemployed. It also created an enabling business environment, thereby making the rural community to be self-employed by venturing into one form of business to the other. The results and findings of this study collaborates the submission of Echebiri, (2017) and Adekunle, et.al., (2019), that people in rural area marry earlier and majority terminated their

educational aspiration at the secondary level, that may result to unemployment. Also, the result in Table 1 point out that more than 49% of the respondents have attained the junior secondary school but more than 46% are not self-employed. These findings support the claim of Udoh, (2018), who assert that inability of junior secondary school graduates to become self-reliant results from lack of productive and marketable skills that should have been learned by the students during their respective time at school.

**Table 2. Available Skills Acquired by Rural Community**

Item Statement	Respondents Upland Area		Percentage		Respondents Lowland Area		Percentage
	Yes	No			Yes	No	
1. Have you learnt any skills before?	148	201	42.41	57.59	209	124	62.76 37.24
2. What kind of skills did you learn?							
• Technical skills	196	153	56.16		100	233	30.03
• Literacy Skills	349	-	45.94		333	-	69.97
			100.00	-			100.00 -
3. Which of the following technical skills did you learn?							
• Electrical Wiring	92	257	26.33	77.17	103	230	30.93
• Electronics Repair	12	337	3.45	96.55	67	266	69.07
• Computer Software Training	102	247	29.23	70.77	169	164	20.12
• Bread and Pastry	75	274	21.48	78.52	85	243	79.88
• Carpentry	109	240	31.24	68.76	102	231	50.75
• Dressmaking	88	261	25.22	74.78	94	239	49.25
• Auto-cad Training	7	342	2.01	97.99	78	255	25.52
• Cellphone Repair	58	291	16.62	83.38	100	233	74.48
• Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	30.63 69.37 28.22 71.78 23.42 76.58 30.03 69.97 -
4. Who sponsored the skills acquisition training that you learnt?							
• Individual scholarship	80	269	22.93	77.07	108	225	32.43
• Government	100	249	28.65	71.35	223	110	67.57
• Relatives	55	294	15.56		145	188	66.96
• Parents	49	300	84.24		287	46	33.04

			14.04 85.96			43.54 56.46 86.18 13.82	
5. What was the duration for your technical skills?							
• 1-3 months	27	322	7.74	92.26	30	303	9.00
• 3-6 months	105	244	30.08	69.92	52	281	91.00
• 1 year	112	343	32.09	98.21	7	326	15.61
• 2-3 years	42	307	12.04	87.96	-	-	84.39
• Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.10 97.90 - - - -
6. What was the duration for your literacy skills acquisition?							
• 6 months	48	301	13.75	86.25	28	72	8.41
• 1 year	72	277	20.63	79.37	11	89	91.59
• 2-3 years	51	298	14.61	85.39	-	-	3.30
• 4-6 years	-	-	-	-	-	-	96.70
• Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	- - - - - -
7. Your literacy skills was acquired through?							
• Formal education	22	327	6.31	93.69	107	226	32.13
• Informal education	97	252	27.79	72.21	58	275	67.87 17.42 82.58

Legend:  $X_1$ = Upland Area,  $X_2$ = Lowland Area

Table 2 shows the available skills acquired by the selected rural community of Laguna. There was a large number of No response ( $X_1=45.94\%$ ,  $X_2=69.97\%$ ) that has learned at technical skills to Yes response ( $X_1=56.16\%$ ,  $X_2=36.03\%$ ) while 100% of the respondents possessed literacy skills. ( $X_1=26.33\%$ ,  $X_2=30.93\%$ ), ( $X_1=3.45\%$ ,  $X_2=20.12\%$ ), ( $X_1$ =possess a technical skill in electrical wiring / electronics repairs and computer software training. Other skills are: bread and pastry ( $X_1=29.23\%$ ,  $X_2=50.75\%$ ), carpentry ( $X_1=21.48\%$ ,  $X_2=25.52\%$ ), dressmaking ( $X_1=31.24\%$ ,  $X_2=30.63\%$ ), auto-cad training ( $X_1=25.22\%$ ,  $X_2=28.22\%$ ), cellphone repair ( $X_1=2.01\%$ ,  $X_2=23.42\%$ ).

Table shows that the rural community possess mastery of the literacy skill which obtained through the formal education (primary, secondary and tertiary) and low percentage on the achievement of technical skills which are marketable for employment and self-employment. These findings collaborate the affirmation of Oviawe, (2018), who affirmed that secondary schools hardly prepare students for their roles

as self-reliant citizens and workers in the 21th century. Moreover, most of today’s institutions are center-based on teaching and learning of theories and never pay attentions to practical oriented conditions and environment that will help in the production of marketable skills graduates.

**Table 3. Skills Needed by Rural Community for Empowerment**

Types of Skills	Respondents Upland Area		Percentage	Respondents Lowland Area		Percentage
	Yes	No		Yes	No	
• Metal works	284	65	81.37	231	102	69.36
• Electrical Installation	220		18.63	271	62	30.64
• Masonry	129		63.04	188	145	81.38
• Hairdressing	190		36.96	234	99	18.62
• Fashion Designing	159		54.44	187	146	56.45
• Cosmetology/ Hair Styling	285	64	45.56	255	8	43.55
• Tailoring	97		81.66	132	201	70.27
• Computer Software	252	201	18.34	101	232	29.73
• Carpentry	148		27.79	199	134	56.15
• Electronics Repair	45		72.21	92	241	43.85
• Auto servicing	304		57.59	87	246	76.57
• Driving	100		42.41	100	233	23.43
• Tie and dye	249		12.89	222	111	39.63
• Bakery	254	95	87.11	76	257	60.37
• Art work	111		28.65	109	224	30.33
• Watch repair	238		71.35	187	146	69.67
• Bead- making	207		72.77	234	99	59.75
• Food and Catering Services	142		27.23	255	78	40.25
• Fish Farming	229		31.80	271	62	27.62
• Welding and Fabrication	120		68.20	134	199	72.38
	98		59.31			26.12
	251		40.69			73.88
	297	52	65.61			30.03
	102		34.39			69.97
	247		28.08			66.67
	277	72	71.92			33.33
	99		85.10			22.82
	250		14.90			77.18
	264	85	29.22			32.73
	288	61	70.78			67.27
	290	59	79.36			56.15
			20.64			43.85
			28.36			70.27
			71.64			29.73

		75.64		76.57
		24.36		23.43
		82.52		81.38
		17.48		18.62
		83.09		40.24
		16.91		59.76

Legend:  $X_1$ = Upland Area,  $X_2$ = Lowland Area

It is important to unveil the skills acquired by the community that will enhance their employment and empowerment. There was a small insignificant response of skills needed as per respondents’ feedback. Some of which are: fashion designing, tailoring, tie and die, and food catering services. On the other hand, most of the skills needed by the upland area of rural community resulted on agreeable response are those in metal works, electrical installation, masonry, hairdressing, cosmetology / hair styling, computer software, carpentry, welding fabrication and bakery among others.

Rural community of lowland area recorded a small insignificant response of skills needed in auto servicing, and bakery. While there is a positive response in metal works, electrical installation, hair dressing, computer software, food and catering services, fish farming and welding and fabrication.

**Table 4. Relevancy of Skills Acquisition for Self - Employed Among Rural Community**

Item Statement	Respondents Upland Area		Percentage	Respondents Lowland Area		Percentage
	Yes	No		Yes	No	
1. Skill acquisition helps to reduce joblessness.	205		58.73	211		63.36
	144		41.27	122		36.64
2. It help to developed rural community entrepreneurial ability.	195		55.87	284		85.28
	154		44.13	49		14.72
3.Skill acquisition help in the discovery of individual talents and potentials.	200		57.30	198		59.45
	149		42.70	135		40.55
4. It encourages the rural community to developed a positive attitude.	165		47.27	166		49.84
	184		52.73	167		50.16
5. It helps in the acquisition of more knowledge.	198		56.73	224		67.26
	151		43.27	109		32.74
6. It reduces the rate of crime in the community.	109		31.23	200		60.06
	240		68.77	133		39.94
7. It promotes individual’s creativity and innovation.	223		63.89	222		66.66
	126		36.11	111		33.34

8. It enhances employment generation.	245	70.20	166	49.84
	104	29.80	167	50.16
9. It reduces the level of poverty.	255	73.06	277	83.18
	94	26.94	56	16.82
10. It promotes unity and cooperation among rural community.	187	53.58	199	59.75
	162	46.42	134	40.25
11. Skills acquisition brings about community development.	190	54.44	100	30.03
	159	45.56	233	69.97
12. It gives individual self esteem	211	60.45	147	44.14
	138	39.55	186	55.86
13. It enhances self - reliance and independency.	217	62.17	175	52.55
	132	37.83	158	47.45
14. Skills acquisition causes a positive change in rural community and the general society.	103	29.51	99	29.72
	246	70.49	234	70.28
15. It makes rural community and the general public not to depend on white collar job.	101	28.93	267	80.18
	248	71.07	66	34.00

Legend:  $X_1$ = Upland Area,  $X_2$ = Lowland Area

Results from Table 4 indicate that skills acquisition helps to reduce joblessness and create jobs. It also reduces poverty level among the rural community of Laguna. This study also revealed that skills acquisition that enhances community self-reliance and independency. This study collaborates the findings of Ogundele, et al (2011) who declared that skills acquisition will aid job creation, youth empowerment and poverty alleviation. It also shows that the general public will not depend on white collar jobs for survival. These results and findings are in tandem with the affirmation of Amaehule (2011) that possession of skills is important in preventing become gainfully employed through misfits, because, these skilled persons become gainfully employed through vocational training and acquisition of skills.

Other findings were: promotion of individual creativity and innovation, development of community's entrepreneurial ability, discovery of individual's talent and potentials. Through the acquisition of skill program, an individual will be able to find out his/her area of competence and capability. An individual must not acquire tertiary educational qualification before it can become useful and meaningful to the society.

**Table 5. Factors Hindering Rural Community's Participation in Skills Acquisition**

Item Statement	Respondents Upland Area		Respondents Lowland Area		Percentage
	Percentage		Percentage		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
1. Negative public perception about skill acquisition.	109	31.23	100	30.03	
	240	68.77	233	69.97	



2. Poor/ lack of training facilities	211	60.45	203	60.96
	138	39.55	313	39.04
3. It takes longer time to acquire a particular skill.	234	67.04	212	63.66
	115	32.96	121	36.34
4. It is a training for the less privilege.	279	79.94	171	51.35
	70	20.06	162	48.65
5. Poor / lack of empowerment after training.	288	82.52	174	52.25
	61	17.48	159	47.75
6. No sponsorship.	290	83.09	229	68.76
	59	19.91	104	31.24
7. No allowances attach during the training period.	305	87.39	256	76.87
	44	12.61	77	23.13
8. Inadequate and inconsistent funding of skill acquisition.	217	62.17	142	42.64
	183	37.83	191	57.36
9. Government policies towards skill acquisition are not always realizable.	199	57.02	223	66.96
	150	42.98	110	33.04

Legend:  $X_1$ = Upland Area,  $X_2$ = Lowland Area

The respondents agreed that all the listed factors actually impede the rural community participation in skill acquisition programs. Prominent among these are poor or lack of training facilities, labor intensiveness and poor funding and financing. This fact is in line with the argument of Chukwuolue (2012) as cited by Ifeakor and Nwanekezi (2013), who noted that one of the criticisms of skills acquisition initiatives has center on the nature and scope of financing of their programs.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

This research study established that the effective utilization of skills acquisition will be a strong combat tool for poverty reduction and empowerment among rural community. The following has been deduced from the findings of this study that; skills acquisition will contribute to the society in terms of reduction of joblessness, as well as crime prevention. It also enhances individual creativity and innovations. Majority of rural community are not technically oriented which is the brain of employment and empowerment. Others have no or little source of income. Enrollment into skill acquisition program was not gender bias as female amidst their counterpart, also participated in one skill which earn them being self-employed. Final, some elements of skill acquisition should be integrated into school learning with extensive supervision.

Base on the findings, it is recommended among others to improve skill acquisition among rural community of Laguna for their improvement that:

- The local government unit should ensure the provision and availability of funds for trainees to be able to set themselves up after acquiring their chosen skills for training.
- Apprenticeship schemes should be formalized in the rural community to enable those pursuing skills acquisition through that medium have sense of belonging.
- Non- government organization and other stakeholders should join hand in hand in organizing skill acquisition center at an affordable rate.

- Companies and government employment exercise should be done in such a way to accommodate or employed people with skills and not to be prepare and certificate qualification only.
- the integration of skill acquisition into educational institutions should be standardizing with modern facilities, qualified instructors with quality supervision.

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