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STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK ON CO-OPTATION OF AGRICULTURE AND BIOLOGY EDUCATION: BRIDGING THEORY AND PRACTICE

Allan B. Del Rosario
Professor, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Central Bicol State University of Agriculture, San Jose, Pili, Camarines Sur, Philippines

Kennedy A. Beltran
Assistant Professor, College of Development Education, Central Bicol State University of Agriculture, San Jose, Pili, Camarines Sur, Philippines

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Abstract

The intersection of agriculture and biology education presents a unique opportunity to enrich learning experiences by bridging theoretical concepts with practical narratives. This study explores the co-optation of agriculture and biology education, aiming to create an integrated curriculum that enhances student understanding of both fields. Examining current educational practices and identifying gaps in the existing curriculum, this research proposes innovative approaches to combine agricultural sciences with biological principles. The study employs a qualitative approach, including observations, to gather data from educators, students, and industry professionals. Key findings suggest that integrating agricultural contexts into biology education not only fosters a deeper comprehension of biological processes but also promotes sustainability and environmental stewardship. The proposed curriculum framework emphasizes hands-on learning, field experiences, and real-world applications, thereby preparing students for future challenges in agriculture and biosciences. This research highlights the potential of interdisciplinary education to cultivate critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a sense of responsibility towards sustainable agricultural practices.

Introduction

Co-optation in this study refers to the merging or intersecting of agriculture and biology discipline which are two areas that have long been intertwined, each influencing and enhancing the other. As the world grapples with challenges related to food security, climate change, and sustainable development, the integration of agriculture and biology education becomes increasingly crucial. This research study explores the concept of co-optation in agriculture and biology education, aiming to bridge theoretical frameworks with practical narratives to foster a more comprehensive and applicable understanding of these fields.

Innovatively, this study on merging of narratives from the perspective of education and agriculturist

created an avenue to draw lines of distinct narratives and proposed model of which these two areas blend. Moreover, since the authors are employee of an agricultural university, this aids the curriculum and instruction of both programs to see its relevance. This study has significant implications for educators, policymakers, and researchers in the fields of agriculture and biology. By bridging theory and narratives, it aims to create a more dynamic and relevant educational framework that prepares students to tackle real-world challenges. The findings can inform curriculum development, teaching strategies, and policy decisions, ultimately contributing to more sustainable and resilient agricultural practices and a deeper understanding of biological systems.

The co-optation of agriculture and biology education represents a promising avenue for enhancing the relevance and impact of both disciplines. By bridging theoretical insights with practical narratives, this research aims to develop an integrated educational model that equips students with the knowledge and skills needed to address complex global challenges. Through this study, we hope to contribute to the advancement of interdisciplinary education and the cultivation of a new generation of learners who are adept at navigating the intricate intersections of agriculture and biology.

The study is grounded in interdisciplinary educational theories that advocate for the integration of knowledge across traditional boundaries. It draws on constructivist theories that emphasize the importance of context and experience in learning, as well as systems thinking approaches that highlight the interconnectedness of biological and agricultural systems. By integrating these theories, the study seeks to develop a framework that supports holistic education in agriculture and biology.

Methodology, Purpose and Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to investigate how the co-optation of agriculture and biology education can be achieved effectively. The researchers examine the existing educational frameworks, teaching methodologies, and narrative structures of both disciplines. The study aims to develop a cohesive model that enhances the learning experiences and outcomes for students in both areas. The research employs qualitative methods approach, to substantively derived data collection and analysis. An extensive review of existing literature on agriculture and biology education, including curriculum studies, pedagogical strategies, and interdisciplinary education models were employed to saturate the needed secondary data in support of the arising co-optation arguments.

In-depth assessments of educational curriculum of both programs, the education and agriculture that have successfully integrated agriculture and biology programs. These studies provided insights into best practices, challenges, and outcomes of co-opted education models. Lastly, the researchers analyzed current curricula in agriculture and biology to identify overlaps, gaps, and opportunities for integration from the state university they served.

Results and Discussions

This part of the paper draws the important portion of the research, it presents the substance of the key results of the findings. It follows the presentation of the co-optation of the theories from various perspective of the discipline understudied, followed by the co-optation of the practices and the meat of the results and discussion, from the melting pots of theories and practice, the framework.

Co-Optation of Theories on Agriculture and Biology Education

Supporters of sustainable agriculture desire profound social transformations, but achieving this goal necessitates curricular legitimacy and collaboration with a wide range of partners offering the same. As the academic work on political co-optation makes clear, the relationship between conviction and credibility is ongoing and unavoidable; it is not a problem to be resolved, but rather an inherent feature of movement in education. In this study, researchers looked closely and intently the intersection of the theories from technical to social context.

To revered the understanding of the gaps of effectivity and implementation of the programs, Atkinson

(1988) highlighted that one important cause for this ineffectiveness has been a failure to identify and implement a solid theoretical foundation. Numerous sources argue that four fundamental components of a curriculum are objectives, content, a program of activities, and evaluation systems. A recently constructed model provides persuasive evidence that philosophical, sociological, and psychological theoretical considerations are critical in the curriculum creation process. Recent reports on projects in numerous English-speaking nations are evaluated. These findings show that tertiary agricultural and horticulture curriculum development is becoming more successful as a result of increased theoretical knowledge. It is also growing more sensitive to the needs of the several organizations having genuine rights to participate in the process.

In recent years, the field of tertiary education in agriculture and horticulture has experienced a transformative shift. This change is driven by the infusion of advanced theoretical knowledge into curriculum development, resulting in programs that are not only comprehensive but also highly relevant to contemporary challenges and opportunities in these sectors. Traditionally, agricultural and horticulture education heavily emphasized practical skills. While hands-on experience remains crucial, the incorporation of robust theoretical frameworks has enriched the curriculum significantly. Students now delve into complex biological processes, genetic engineering, sustainable farming practices, and the latest technological advancements. This depth of knowledge ensures that graduates are well-prepared to tackle real-world problems with a solid scientific foundation.

The integration of theoretical knowledge has spurred the adoption of innovative teaching methodologies. Educators leverage techniques such as problem-based learning, where students are presented with real-life agricultural issues that require critical thinking and application of theoretical principles. Case studies and simulation exercises have become standard practice, providing students with immersive learning experiences that bridge the gap between theory and practice. With a stronger theoretical base, tertiary institutions have seen a surge in research activities. Both faculty and students are exploring new frontiers in agriculture and horticulture, from developing drought-resistant crop varieties to advancing precision farming techniques. This research not only contributes to the academic body of knowledge but also offers practical solutions to pressing agricultural challenges, fostering a dynamic and innovative academic environment.

Modern agricultural and biology education programs are increasingly interdisciplinary, reflecting the complexity of global agricultural systems. Theoretical knowledge from fields such as environmental science, economics, and biotechnology is seamlessly integrated into the curriculum. This holistic approach equips students with a broad perspective, enabling them to understand and address the multifaceted nature of agricultural issues. the integration of advanced theoretical knowledge into tertiary agricultural and horticulture curriculum development is yielding remarkable results. It is creating a generation of graduates who are not only skilled practitioners but also innovative thinkers, researchers, and policymakers. This evolution in education is essential for addressing the complex challenges of modern agriculture and ensuring a sustainable and prosperous future for the industry.

To capture the various theories on the co-optation of these discipline, here is the nested narratives from various perspectives.

Table 1. Co-Optation of Theories on Agriculture and Biology Education

THEORIES	EMPHASIS	KEY CONCEPTS
Constructivist Theory	➢ Learning is influenced by the context in which it occurs, as well as by the beliefs and attitudes of the learner. ➢ Emphasizes hands-on, experiential learning where students engage in	➢ Learning is an active, constructive process. ➢ Knowledge is constructed based on personal experiences and hypotheses of the

	experiments, fieldwork, and practical applications.	environment.
	Current trends and innovations in education.	
Inquiry-Based Learning	➢ Encourages students to ask questions about biological processes and agricultural practices. ➢ Facilitates research projects where students investigate issues such as pest control, soil health, or genetic modification. ➢ Uses case studies and current scientific research to drive discussions and exploration.	➢ Learning begins with the curiosity of the learner. ➢ Education should be grounded in real-world problems and scenarios. ➢ Students learn best through a cycle of questioning, investigating, and discussing.
Situated Learning Theory	➢ Promotes learning within the context of agricultural communities, such as through cooperative farms or research institutes. ➢ Supports internships and apprenticeships that allow students to participate in the daily activities and practices of agricultural professionals. ➢ Emphasizes learning environments that mirror real-world agricultural settings.	➢ Learning is inherently social and occurs through participation in a community of practice. ➢ Knowledge is situated and tied to the activity, context, and culture in which it is learned.

By integrating these educational theories, agricultural and biology education programs can create rich, engaging, and effective learning experiences that prepare students for the complexities and challenges of the field.

Co-Optation of Practices on Agriculture and Biology Education

Biology, the study of life and living organisms, can be taught in various contexts to make the subject more relatable and engaging for students. One effective approach is using agriculture as a context for teaching biology. This method leverages the relevance of agriculture in daily life and its practical applications to illustrate biological concepts, making learning more meaningful and engaging. Agricultural Education teachers have been pushed to develop techniques for incorporating more scientific elements into their agriculture curricula. For nearly two decades, various sources have supported the concept of integrating science into agricultural education programs (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; National Academy of Sciences, Committee on Agricultural Education in Secondary Schools, 1988; Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, 1991). Research findings back up the assumption that integrating science into agriculture curricula is a more effective way to teach science. Studies conducted and replicated support the findings that students taught using agricultural and scientific principles performed better than students taught using traditional approaches (Enderlin & Osborne, 1992; Enderlin, Petrea, & Osborne, 1993; Roegge & Russell, 1990; Whent & Leising, 1988). According to Osborne and Dyer (1998), "as a result curriculum redesign efforts in the 1990's in agricultural education have converged on identifying promising

strategies that incorporate more science into high school agricultural curricula".

Although recent science publications have espoused the attributes of integrating science curricula, the level of integration referred to is almost always with other science courses (Scotter, Bybee, & Dougherty, 2000; Steckelberg, Hoadley, Thompson, Martin, & Borman, 2000; Henriques, 2000). There is limited evidence to support the idea that science teachers should look for ways to incorporate more hands-on, applied scientific concepts into their curricula. To date, the researcher has found no empirical evidence to suggest that science teachers have been urged to incorporate agricultural science and/or food system principles into their curricula in an effort to make science more relevant to their pupils. Similarly, no information was found recommending science teachers to contact other teachers in order to collaborate with teachers who teach similar content.

Caine and Caine's (1994) brain-based research and learning provide additional evidence for giving students with diverse contexts. They also advocate for education to recognize the big picture. They continue by saying, "the part is always embedded in a whole, the fact is always embedded in multiple contexts, and a subject is always related to many other issues and subjects". As a result, brain-based theory and experiential learning theory propose that the interface between context and content offers pupils numerous opportunities for transfer and overlap of complimentary notions. Teaching biology using agriculture as the context offers a dynamic and practical approach to education. It not only enhances students' understanding of biological concepts but also promotes awareness of sustainable agricultural practices and potential career paths. By bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world applications, this method fosters a deeper appreciation of the role of biology in everyday life and global food security.

Co-optation of practices in agriculture and biology education refers to the integration or adoption of successful practices from one field into another. This concept involves the transfer of methods, techniques, or ideas that have proven effective in one context to improve outcomes in another. Table 2 shows the co-optation of the various practices of agriculture and biology education as an academic discipline.

Table 2. Co-Optation of Practices on Agriculture and Biology Education

AREAS	EMPHASIS
Curriculum Development	Incorporating agricultural practices into biology education curricula. For example, biology courses might include practical modules on crop science, soil biology, or sustainable farming practices.
Fieldwork and Practical Experience	Using agricultural settings as living laboratories for biology students. Field trips to farms or research stations can provide hands-on learning experiences and real-world applications of biological concepts.
Interdisciplinary Research	Encouraging collaborative research projects between agriculture and biology departments. This can lead to innovative approaches to pest management, crop improvement, or environmental conservation.
Technology Integration	Applying technological advancements from agriculture (such as precision farming tools) to biology education, such as using data analytics and remote sensing in biological research and teaching.
Educational Partnerships	Forming partnerships between educational institutions and

	agricultural organizations or businesses. These partnerships can provide students with internship opportunities, research funding, and industry insights.
Sustainability Practices	Incorporating sustainable agricultural practices and principles into biology education. This can include topics like organic farming, ecosystem management, and the impact of agriculture on biodiversity.

By co-opting practices from agriculture into biology education, educational programs can enhance the relevance and applicability of their teaching, better prepare students for careers in related fields, and contribute to solving real-world challenges.

Strategic Framework for Co-Optation of Agriculture and Biology Education

A strategic framework for the co-optation of agriculture and biology education involves integrating and aligning these fields to enhance educational outcomes, research capabilities, and practical applications. To make sense of the framework, the variables from the theories and practices of the primary and secondary data are hereby incorporated and strategically presented to develop the necessary structure of the paper.

By following this strategic framework, educational institutions can effectively integrate agriculture and biology to produce graduates who are well-equipped to tackle complex challenges in these interconnected fields.

Figure 1 below shows the relationships and integrative feedback of the focus and establishments of the integration of agriculture and biology education.

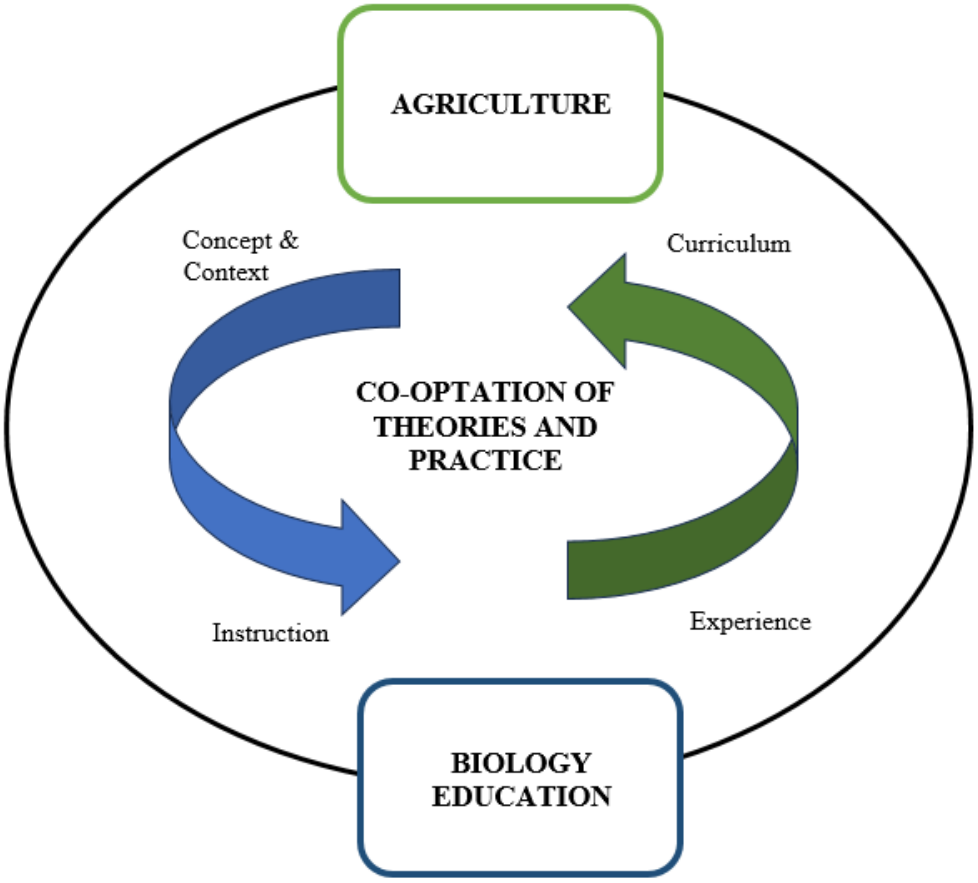

Figure 1. Strategic Framework on the Co-optation of Agriculture and Biology Education

Through this framework, policy makers may integrate the essence of dual or interdisciplinary programs to cater the number of students who are willing to take the multidisciplinary discipline. Create an educational system where agriculture and biology are intertwined, providing a holistic approach to addressing challenges in sustainable agriculture, food security, and environmental protection.

This framework is designed to create a cohesive educational approach that prepares students to tackle complex issues at the intersection of agriculture and biology, ultimately contributing to advancements in both fields and their practical applications.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that:

It is necessity to bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and practical applications in agriculture and biology education. A strategic framework that incorporates hands-on experiences, fieldwork, and real-world problem-solving into the curriculum can enhance students' understanding and readiness for professional challenges. The alignment of academic theories with practical needs ensures that students are better equipped to address current and future issues in these fields.

A well-structured curriculum is crucial for the effective co-optation of agriculture and biology education. This involves integrating contemporary scientific advances and technological innovations into the educational framework. By adopting a dynamic and adaptable curriculum, institutions can better prepare students for the evolving demands of the agriculture and biology sectors.

Building strong relationships with industry partners is essential for aligning educational outcomes with real-world needs. The strategic framework should include mechanisms for regular engagement with industry professionals, internships, and cooperative education opportunities. These partnerships can provide valuable insights into industry trends and help ensure that the education provided is relevant and up-to-date.

The framework should include robust mechanisms for evaluating its effectiveness and making necessary adjustments. Regular feedback from students, faculty, and industry partners can inform improvements and ensure that the educational approach remains relevant and effective. Finally, the research underscores the importance of sustainability in implementing the strategic framework. Efforts should be made to ensure that the framework contributes to long-term improvements in education and addresses the broader goals of sustainable development in agriculture and biology.

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