Poster Type (Innovative Idea)

Developing Youth Entrepreneurs for Rural Development in Colombia

Carlos A. Parra Salinas
University of Caldas
Agricultural Science Faculty
Carrera 35 No. 62 - 160
Manizales, Colombia.
Phone: (765) 409-5967
Fax: (57) 687-81517
Email: carlos.parra@ucaldas.edu.co

Neil A. Knobloch
Purdue University
915 W. State Street, LILY 3-232
West Lafayette, Indiana, USA
Phone: (765) 494-8439
Fax: (765) 496-1152
Email: nknobloc@purdue.edu

Developing Youth Entrepreneurs for Rural Development in Colombia

Introduction/Need for Innovation

Rural Colombian youth have limited opportunities in accessing high quality education, which results in limited access to competitive employment opportunities. Rural employment in Colombia is characterized by poor working conditions, no benefits, and low wages. Social and economic opportunities in rural communities have been affected by the historical guerrilla conflict. The emotional and financial hardships in many rural communities has accelerated youth migration to larger cities. Youth migration has negative consequences for developing human capital to help rural communities grow and develop.

How It Works/Program Phases

A consortium of industry, government and academic partners (Coffee Farmers Committee of Caldas; Government of Caldas; Caldas University) developed a K-12 educational program (University in Rural Communities—Ucampo) that would provide high school students dual-credit courses that were articulated with Caldas University's regional and main campuses. The Ucampo program (Figure 1) provides high school students the opportunity to complete three degrees—technical (60 credits), technological (+30 credits), and professional (+90 credits). High school students can complete the technical degree as dual-credit courses while enrolled in high school and help them adjust to taking college courses (Bailey, Hughes & Karp, 2002; Boswell, 2001). The goal of the Ucampo program is to increase the number of high school students to continue their college education and broaden their career opportunities through an articulated educational program (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010; Tobon, 2008).

Professors from the Caldas University teach the dual-credit courses in rural high schools, which provides high school students the opportunity to gain college credits without leaving their home—the college courses also help the high school students connect learning to their local communities with the hope that youth will return to rural areas and start profitable agricultural enterprises that will generate sufficient resources for a quality living conditions (Mendez, 2016). High school students are engaged in learning about entrepreneurship projects (e.g., similar to Supervised Agricultural Experiences) that might become future agricultural-related businesses in the local rural communities. High school students who choose to pursue technological and professional degrees continue to develop their entrepreneurship training through courses and internships.

A new component is being added to the Ucampo Program, which will provide college students the opportunity to develop their business plans, take entrepreneurship and technical courses, and experience campus life at Purdue University. This international internship, known as Nexo Rural Program, will further develop 21st century skills, including English-proficiency (written and oral communications), continued professional and technical education, entrepreneurship literacy, creativity and innovation, social and cross-cultural skills, and global awareness. The purpose of this poster is to highlight the key components, innovative design features, and preliminary results of the Ucampo Program, and the future plans of the Nexo Rural Program.

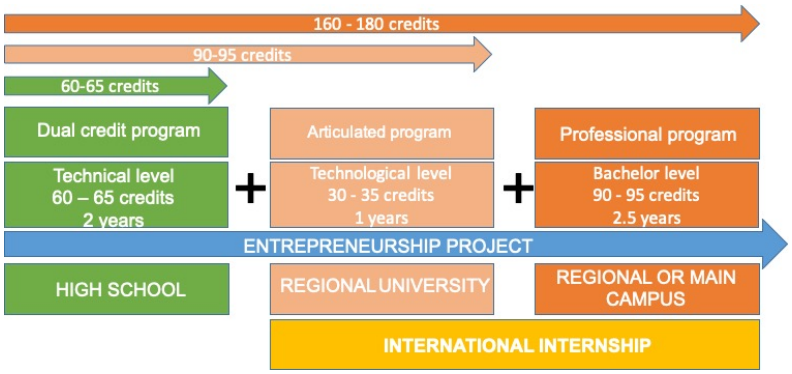

Figure 1. Rural entrepreneurship project program model

Results to Date/Implications

From 2009-2016, 2,050 high school students completed the dual-credit program. Nearly 20% of these students (n = 402) enrolled in post-secondary education and 143 of these students developed business plans and implemented entrepreneurship projects in the areas of animal production (i.e., swine, ornamental fish, aquaculture, dairy, poultry, beekeeping, rabbits, mules), crop production (i.e., coffee, rubber, horticulture, avocado, edible mushrooms), marketing, and agritourism. The students enrolled in post-secondary education programs received financial support from industry to implement their entrepreneurship projects. Approximately 10% of the students (n = 40) who chose to enroll in post-secondary education have continued their education to earn bachelor's degrees in agriculture.

Future Plans/Advice to Others

The next step for this program is to encourage the creation of strategic links between actors of the National and International System of Science and Technology, and develop 21st century skills of youth who have transitioned through phases 1 and 2 and are currently in phase 3 of the program. To fulfill this purpose, the Nexo Rural Entrepreneurship Development project was developed as a new component, which consists of taking 40 college students in the technological and professional levels to Purdue University for a 6-month internship to strengthen their skills in entrepreneurship, ESL, and social and cross-cultural skills, and global awareness.

Costs/Resources Needed

The Colombian government provided an $800,000 grant for the development of the Nexo Rural Entrepreneurship Development program to fund: (1) the training of 100 college students in a second language (i.e., English); (2) travel expenses, documentation, living expenses for 40 college students; (3) six months of entrepreneurship and research training in the areas of rural entrepreneurship for the 40 students at Purdue University; and, (4) the subsequent impact evaluation of the program conducted by a team of researchers in Agricultural and Extension Education. This program model, the design features, and student outcomes of the project will be relevant to youth outreach programs at universities, international study abroad experiences, and the integration of instruction, leadership development, and entrepreneurship development for rural communities. This project will also help better understand students' motivations and barriers to pursue careers in agriculture, food and natural resources, especially in rural communities, which has implications for universities to address the rural youth migration to cities.

References

Alliance for Excellent Education. (2010). *Current challenges and opportunities in preparing rural high school students for success in college and careers: What federal policymakers need to know*. Washington, DC: Author. In: https://all4ed.org/wpcontent/uploads/2010/02/RuralHSReportChallengesOpps.pdf

Bailey, T., Hughes, K. & Karp, M. (2002). *What role can dual enrollment programs play in easing the transition between high school and postsecondary education?* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education.

Boswell, K. (2001). State policy and postsecondary enrollment options: Creating seamless systems. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 113*, 7-14.

Méndez, M. (2016). Factores de expulsión y retención en la decisión migratoria de jóvenes Rurales en Manizales, Colombia[Expulsion and retention factors in the migration decision of rural youth in Manizales, Colombia]. *InterSedes, 17*(36). doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.15517/isucr.v17i36.26943

Tobón, S. (2008). La formación basada en competencias en la educación superior: el enfoque complejo. [*Competency-based training in higher education: the complex approach.* Guadalajara, MX: Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara.