

The Model of Open Agrarian School as a Means of Realization of Traditional Habits and Lifelong Learning

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Abstract: One of the priority issues not only in different countries but also in the Republic of Armenia is the insertion of programs into the secondary education system aimed at raising the quality and reputation of education in rural communities, and the opportunity to get lifelong learning. The goal of the research is to develop an “Open Agrarian School” model that will contribute to sustainable agrarian, socio-cultural development of rural communities on the basis of international and local experience analysis. In order to achieve the mentioned goal, it is necessary to identify open agrarian school components, resources, carry out the needed actions and provide certain results. During the survey, the following methods were used: student-centered approaches, new educational technologies, professional orientation, and pre-vocational education methods, pilot-tested species and innovative technology experiments relevant to specific climate conditions. The model will ensure the preservation of national cultural traditions and values, to give knowledge and skills on the “green economy” to generations, providing lifelong learning. As a result, communities will be formed in rural areas with leadership qualities and skills to design and implement projects. Community members guided by national customs will carry care and responsibility for the development of their homeland, and the different layers of the community will demonstrate their commitment to lifelong learning. The research is consistent with the objectives set out in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals included in the UN Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.

Keywords: Rural Community, Traditional Habits, Model of Open Agrarian Schools, Lifelong Learning

1. Introduction

Today, the introduction of programs aimed at raising the quality and reputation of education in rural communities, the preservation of national traditions and the chance to get lifelong learning are priority issues in the Republic of Armenia.

Year after year, the mentality that living in the village and dealing with agriculture is a black, unprofitable and unpromising job becomes more popular. Village life is associated with the low level of socio-cultural and economic

development of the country, as a result of which rural youth do not want to return, live and work in the village after getting the education. As a result, emigration from the homeland and demilitarization of villages and land degradation increase, and biodiversity is reduced.

Rural communities are located far from economic and cultural centers, which causes the formation of the autonomous and closed system of life and living, the scope of social relations is aggravated, the villagers are alienated from modern technologies, modern methods of economy and culture. Today in the villages the population is guided by agricultural knowledge traditionally passed from generation

to generation, as a result, the modern agricultural approaches and technologies are not invested and communities do not have high-quality crops [5-6].

From this point of view, lifelong learning is an important factor in possession of advanced agricultural technologies for rural communities on the way to the transition to an innovative economy in the region. The latter can also increase the quality and prosperity of life in rural areas based on traditional and non-traditional habits. Learners, who live in villages, are not competent to properly organize their daily rural living. Establishing “Open Schools” in rural areas is an effective solution to this problem, which proves the introduction of such programs in different countries. “Open School” provides a prior opportunity to integrate education closely with the outside world. Teaching “Open Schools” supposes close relationship with the environment, taking into account a number of social factors, which affects the person's formation. “Open School” is a promising tool to integrate academic extra-curricular educational and educational activities. The school should have a curriculum for all degrees, which will increase students' social activity, overall cultural development, and the quality of interpersonal skills [8].

Since 2005, the Republic of Armenia has joined the “Education for Sustainable Development” process, one of the key topics of which is the “Rural Communities Development” and this study focuses on the implementation of “Sustainable Production and Sustainable Consumption” components. The relevance of the survey is also conditioned by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals included in the UN Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 [9].

The introduction of the open agrarian school model in regions of Armenia will contribute to the provision of non-formal education for parents, agrarian, socio-cultural development of rural communities.

“Open School” as the civic education center for children, adults and community initiatives helps villagers to set up village groups to settle economic, environmental, charity, educational and other issues of the village. In such groups, both children and adults work together, which allow them to communicate in non-formal situations, to learn from each other and to teach each other. Children learn to do charitable work, starting with helping families who have the need in different kind of works, ending with the participation of implementation of the community work [2, 7, 10].

2. Material Resources and Methods

The “Open School” resources are school, teachers, learners, alumni, parents, community, partner organizations, beneficial individuals and alternative experimental programs.

Methods:

1. introduction of student-centered teaching methods;
2. implementation of new educational technologies;
3. testing of relevant types and innovative technologies in the given area;

4. introduction of professional orientation and pre-vocational education in the framework of agrarian professions,
5. capacities and values shaping methods:
 - a) rural community - strengthening school connectivity;
 - b) at school provision of - pupil - teacher, pupil - pupil, and parent - teacher employment relationships.

The school organizes the effective collaboration of these components with its supervisor and teaching staff. The school becomes an example of an organization whose activities are open to the community and society is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Structure of Open School.

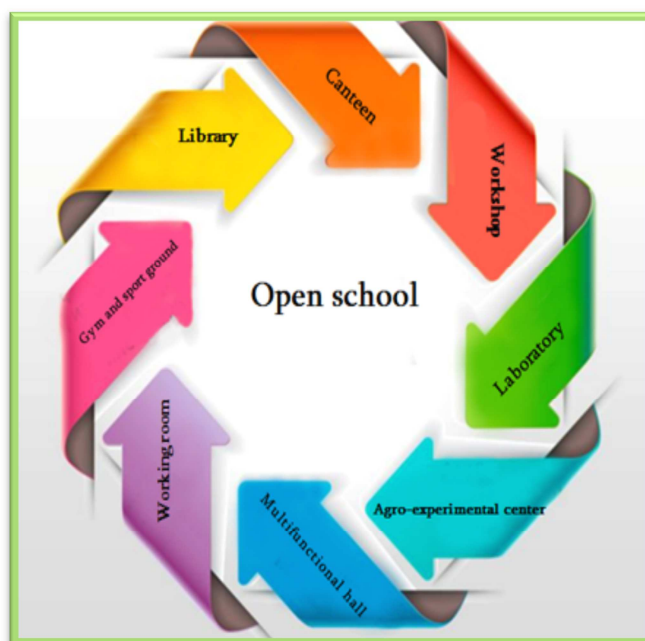


Figure 2. Components of Open School.

The school also has different components - classrooms, library, canteen, workshops, laboratories, agro-experimental center, multifunctional hall, gym, and sports ground. As shown in Figure 2, each of the components is important and may vary depending on the climatic conditions of the area, the priority issues that are set before the community and other factors [4].

The classrooms should be suitable for individual and group study. It is desirable that classrooms be adapted to use modern ICT tools.

The canteen is not only a place to eat but also an educational lab where children will gather traditional recipes, learn to prepare, to serve, and test.

The library - it is here that school students and community members will have the opportunity to get acquainted with the "big world" and get information. The library, with computers connected to the Internet, will enable every resident to find answers to questions of interest, to get acquainted with the news of the world.

The agro-experimental center is the most important component of the "Open School", where all children, along with community members, will learn to work and apply what they have learned.

Depending on the region and adaptability for certain species, the agro-experimental center includes a fruit tree garden, a seeding soil, a herbal collection and processing unit, a flower garden, a beekeeping unit, a livestock farm, and a greenhouse. Each student can spend a part of his learning process time in this center getting acquainted with the country's cultural traditions, cuisine, and manufactured food products and so on.

Here they will also learn to organize others' work, analyze the center's work, find its strong and weak points, and make recommendations as a result of the analysis. The farmer - the future rural business manager is formed here.

The multifunctional hall, besides the school's needs, will serve community members. There will be organized various types of meetings, lectures, film watching, concerts, and other events.

The gym and sports ground will serve as a place for health-improving, sports, and exercise classes organized for sports teams.

The following steps must be taken to implement the mission and concept of "Open School"

1. In parallel with the general education program, develop and introduce an alternative experimental agrarian education program, which can be effectively introduced in schools of other regions of Armenia in the future. Develop a rural school model for agrarian school [4].
2. Provide an effective experience of the platform for the agrarian experimental innovation center, which will give the opportunity to spread the results and experience in other communities as well [1].
3. Ensure the high results of learners set by general state education standards, sufficient and sustainable knowledge and skills in the agricultural sector, which

are necessary for any rural citizen in accordance with modern requirements to engage in agricultural activities.

4. Formulate collaborative work planning and implementation skills in the community, which is an important precondition for building inter-community cooperation and building a sustainable rural community [7].
5. Knowledge and usage of modern ICT technologies to obtain and develop new information, to study the international experience, and to establish inter-community connections.
6. School and community cooperation strengthen and deepen the connection between parents and children.
7. Professional development of pedagogical staff as a result of cooperation, training and studying local and international educational (including agrarian education sphere) institutions and organizations' experience.

In order to organize the work properly, it's necessary to clarify the objectives, resources, and functions of the fields.

For example, the goal of *the learning environment* can be the provision the educational (physical) environment that meets modern educational requirements, the creation of an experimental agrarian center.

Resources sphere target can be the replenishment of material and technical base, the creation and enhancement of resources for an alternative experimental program - greenhouse, beekeeping platform, rabbit-keeping center, small modern barn, milk processing, and dairy production workshop.

And in order to have *human resources* it is necessary to realize:

- a professional and pedagogical *improvement* of pedagogical staff - through the provision of continuity of teachers' training and self-development activities (subject, methodology, ICT usage) and the cooperation of other organizations,
- b alternative project,
- c *replenishment* of relevant personnel.

In order to improve *the learning process*, it's necessary to:

- a introduction of student-centered approaches in teaching, implementation of research projects, the realization of research and creative activities of students, the introduction of integrated agrarian programs and modules in parallel with general education programs,
- b ensuring professional orientation of learners and guidance of pre-vocational education;
- c implementation of vocational education, expansion of the range of agrarian professions.

In order to ensure the *educational content*, it is necessary to implement the import of alternative experimental programs and modules, analysis of the results, the distribution of the productive rural agrarian school model in other regions of Armenia [3].

In order to make the *upbringing* process (values formation, provision of civic education, engaging in community life) it is necessary to integrate the learners to social life, to develop

skills for demonstrating public activity, strengthening community-school cooperation.

At school, it is necessary to provide a learner-teacher, learner-learner, parent-teacher healthy working relationship.

In order to carry out extracurricular activities, it is necessary to organize research and creative design groups, various club activities, summer schools, and other schools and organizations in accordance with learners' preferences.

The purpose of the field of agricultural innovations is to test and propagate relevant crop varieties and innovative technologies, as well as to present traditional ones in a new way.

School administration needs to be improved through the

development of school direction and management system, and the improvement of activities of consultative bodies (pedagogical, parental and pupil counseling).

Cooperation with the rural community and other organizations

The purpose of the work should be to implement community-based (cultural, awareness, agricultural, health and other) projects, and promote cooperation with local and relevant international organizations.

3. Actions and Results

In order to achieve the expected results, certain actions are to be made see Table 1.

Table 1. Actions implementing at the Open School and expected results.

Action	Result
Development of content of alternative agrarian education: development of subject curriculum, methodological guidelines, modules, and educational plan	Availability of educational resources for all the levels of schools in the community
Creation of agricultural material-technical base, replenishment with modern technologies	Agricultural tools, machinery, Seeds, planting material base, Drip irrigation system, Greenhouse, livestock farm, beekeeping, and essential ingredients for rabbit breeding.
An overview of the experiences of foreign agribusiness companies, the organization of mutual visits	A clear understanding of the models of organization of agro-education, Design of adapted local rural school.
Training of pedagogical staff	Availability of trained specialists
Conducting Agroecology lessons and practical classes	The availability of appropriate agro-educational materials in the curriculum

4. Conclusion

As a result of the research, students will be formulated:

1. professional and entrepreneurial competencies in the field of agriculture, the ability to develop and implement new projects, and ambition to implement new social initiatives [3, 7],
2. willingness to engage in lifelong learning in order to provide professional and personal growth;
3. responsibility and desire to live in the homeland, to learn, to be guided by national traditions, to create and to make it more prosperous,
4. leadership qualities for those who will be ready to show care and responsibility for the development and strengthening of the community and the homeland,
5. development of research and creative activity skills;
6. preparing learners for conscientiously future profession selection and professional orientation as a result of the training.

In order to achieve an effective research the parent involvement in agricultural work, as well as the application of innovative agricultural approaches, positive outcomes, and dissemination of experiences are of high importance.

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