

Sustenance Local Community via Youth Program of Organic Agriculture

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Author's Background

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Summary

"I'm the Organic Style (ITOS)" is a youth program provided by NOASM (Namyangju Organic Agricultural Science Museum). The participants of ITOS program are middle school students aged from 14 to 16 years old. The ITOS program is a self-designed program aimed at the production of organic vegetables to make food.

Background

Museums provide knowledge and inspiration, while also connecting communities. (National Museum Directors Conference (NMDC), 'Museums Deliver', 2010) The roles of public museum are diverse. However, the social responsibilities of museum are aesthetic, educational and social which means exhibition, education, and experience. (Zeller, 1989)

The NOASM (Namyangju Organic Agricultural Science Museum) is a public museum and was established for the hosting of the 17th IFOAM Organic World Congress in Namyangju city, South Korea. (Paul, 2011) NOASM was also the historic venue of the IFOAM General Assembly in 2011. NOASM recorded a total of 100,299 visitors in 2012 and is 190,000 visitors in 2013. The categories of providing exposure programs are permanent, cooking, harvest and specialized programs including complex family fun programs during the weekends. There are over 40 such programs applicable to kindergarteners, elementary, middle, and high school students, and adults.

Teenagers are adolescent so are more emotionally susceptible. However, fruitful experience in this age may nurture life-long mortality in their life. Museums also have a role of supporting the development of communities and many museums have developed teen programs connected to communities. ITOS ("I'm the Organic Style") is designed for teenaged students programed and the prospective of this program is let students operate community gardens designed from their choice of vegetables, plot allocation, and cultivation to harvest.

Methodology

The ITOS program was conducted with 19 participants of middle school students of 14 to 16 years old for 4 months from March 22nd to July 19th in 2013. The program was connected to middle-school curriculum of "creative experiential activity" (CEA). All participants are volunteers in this program and were divided up into 4 groups.

The challenges of ITOS program are shown under time schedule. (Table 1)

Table 1: The challenges in ITOS program (in 2013)

| Date | Challenges |
|------------------------|--|
| March 22 nd | Introduction of Community gardening Study: Community garden study & Master planning Activity: Plowing |
| April 19 th | Study: Growth vs. Reproduction Activity: Planting vegetables and Mulching |
| May 24 th | Study: Physiology & Ecology of plants, 24 seasons in calendar Activity: Vegetable gardening |
| June 21 st | Study: Change observation after composting Activity: Making environmentally friendly compost & fungicide Harvest: Tomato, Lettuce and Potato |
| July 19 th | Harvest: Corn, Hot pepper, Sweet potato Discussion: Gardening & Course in life education Completion of program |

A survey was conducted at the last session with nine questionnaires. The evaluation of the program was scored on a scale of 1 to 5 for the overall satisfaction. A response of "1" or "2" signified "satisfaction." The five-point scale was based on class contents and field activity suggesting that customers generally report satisfaction at five levels: very satisfied ; satisfied ; neither satisfied nor dissatisfied ; dissatisfied ; and very dissatisfied.

Result and Discussion

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The questionnaire results indicated that the most interesting class was “Compost Making” and “Gardening”. The “Physiology & Ecology of Plants” class was surveyed to be the least interesting. Students were interested in field activity and the more practical applications of compost & fungicide. They have had no chance or exposure to have those activities in school. The “Physiology & Ecology of Plants” class was seemed to be too tough to understand. 18 out of 19 students met the overall program schedules of 3 hours in a month. 16 students showed satisfaction in their scores of “1” and “2”. Only 3 students showed scores of “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.” The last question was “what you learned in this program?” – and the students’ replies clearly showed their interests . After the harvest of potatoes, lettuce, and tomatoes, students decided to cook some organic food and serve to elders in the neighbourhood by themselves.



Figure 1. Plowing



Figure 2. Planting and Mulching



Figure 3. Gardening and Harvesting



Figure 4. Cooking



Figure 5. Serving Slow Food



Figure 6. Participants

Conclusions

The ITOS program is designed for teenagers with a long-term gardening activity aimed at sustenance local community building. The program provides field farming experience from designing a garden, planting to harvest and making food, so- called “farm to table.” And by deciding to serve the local community with the food made from harvested farm-products, the participants of the program learnt the values of agriculture, food and community building. But most importantly, they learnt self-reliance and increased their self-esteem via the ITOS program.

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