



Comparison of Organic Farmer - Trainers in Japan and the Philippines

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Abstract Farmer-trainer is a generic term used to address farmers who provide and conduct trainings not only to farmers, but also to other actors such as agricultural extension agents, students, teachers, hobbyists, and businessmen in a community. They play very important roles in the dissemination and adoption of technologies. Through these farmer-trainers, younger generations will be encouraged and motivated to engage in organic farming, and issues related to decreasing number and aging population of existing farmers in Japan and the Philippines can be partially solved. Prior to conducting research about the effectiveness of organic farmer-trainers in the Philippines, this paper aims to qualitatively explore, interpret, and understand perceptions, experiences, and motivations to compare organic farmer-trainers (OFTs) and institutions in the Philippines. Using Life History Approach (LHA) and Grounded Theory Approach (GTA), this qualitative study analyzed collected data from interviews and observations of purposively selected four OFT and two institutions. Observations and interviews revealed that OFTs have varied reasons such as sustainability, health, and environmental concerns, and motivations to conduct their respective trainings. These reasons and motivations affect the farmer-trainer's training method and quality, and impact to their respective trainees. In general, Filipino OFTs should consider and adopt the philosophy and uniqueness of how Japanese OFTs conduct trainings and impact the community.

Keywords farmer-trainer, agricultural training, organic agriculture, motivation, qualitative

INTRODUCTION

Japan with 126.89 M population and the Philippines with 102.96 M are respectively on the 6th and 7th place of the top 10 populated countries in Asia. The continent accounts for 60% of the world population (Asia Population, 2017). This population put pressure to the farmers to produce more food as the demand on food and food production also increases. With the huge number of mouths to feed, problems and challenges on food safety and food sufficiency in terms of the decreasing numbers of new farmers arise.

In Japan, one of the greatest factors limiting agricultural sustainability is the shortage of farmers due to lack of new farmers and aging of existing farmers, with an average age of 67 years old (Muramoto et al., 2010). The food security of the Philippines, on the other hand, is also at risk, as millions of farmers and fishermen are also aging with an average age of 57 years old (Salio, 2013). Younger generations are not keen on taking over the farm and do not see farming as a lucrative career.

To answer these challenges, organic agriculture (OA) appears to have a good potential. Moreover, to encourage younger generations to engage in farming and to uplift the morale of farmers, appropriate and effective dissemination of technologies must be considered. The study of Murshed-E-Jahan and Pems (2011) on trainings for Bangladeshi small farmers concluded that providing trainings to build the capacity of farmers is more valuable than the provision of financial support. Moreover, farmer-trainers or trainings involving farmers were also significant in mobilizing and training fellow farmers, hosting demonstration plots, and bulking and distributing planting materials in Kenya (Lukuy et al., 2012) and playing a complementary role to formal extension services in facilitating the spread of agricultural technologies and improving farmers' capacities (Kiptot and Franzel, 2015).

In the Philippines, outstanding farmers are recognized as *Magsasaka Siyentista* (MS) or Farmer-Scientist by the Department of Agriculture (DA). According to Qamar (2012), MS plays vital roles in showcasing and promoting indigenous and science and technology-based agriculture by providing direct farmer-to-farmer extension services based on their own farming experiences. In Japan, “veteran farmers” (*rōnō*) have been acknowledged as the significant instrument in bringing out the success of the policy that seeks ways to develop methods suitable to agriculture since the 1870s, and knowledgeable of traditional farming and conduct farmer-to-farmer activities (Minami, 1986).

Farmers have important roles as scientists in the creation of agricultural technology and educators to disseminate such innovations. Farmers have been increasingly recognized as innovators and experimenters, and their indigenous knowledge have also been accepted as valid and useful in agriculture (Chambers et al., 1989).

OBJECTIVES

Prior to conducting research about the effectiveness of organic farmer-trainers (OFT) in Japan and the Philippines, this paper aims to qualitatively explore, interpret and understand perceptions, experiences and motivations of selected OFTs and institutions to compare the trainers in Japan and the Philippines.

METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative study based on interviews and observations of four OFTs (two respondents per country) and two trainers from institutions which were selected using purposive sampling. Life History Approach (LHA) and Grounded Theory Approach (GTA) are utilized to reveal new information, uncover dimensions (e.g. beliefs, thoughts, and motivations), and provide insights into complex relations, which can be critical in order to understand their similarities and differences.

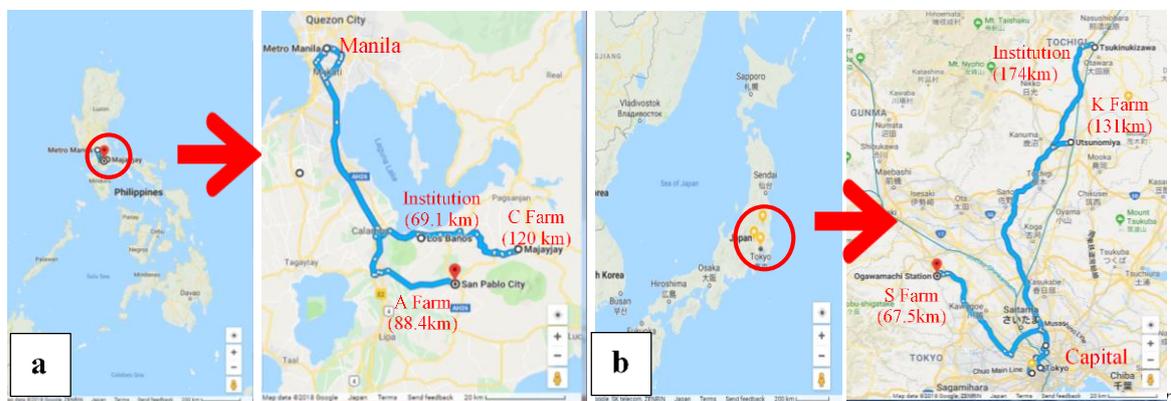


Fig. 1 Map of the Philippines (a) and Japan (b) showing the location of selected farms and institutions

A series of field surveys were conducted in May, August and November 2017 in Saitama and Tochigi, Japan, and in March and July to August 2018 in Laguna, Philippines. Figure 1 shows the map, location, and distances from the respective capitals to OFTs' farms and institutions.

Life History Approach (LHA) and Grounded Theory Approach (GTA) were utilized to analyze the lives of farmers in relation to their motivation and reasons why they conduct trainings; and provide the guidelines to identify categories, make links between categories, and establish relationships between them, respectively. Indicators (e.g. motivation, training strategy, contents, and innovation modified or invented) were explored and utilized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Farmer-trainers in Japan

Since the Japanese government acknowledged the importance of veteran farmer (*rōnō*) (Minami, 1986), there is a need to comprehend how and why they have continued to conduct trainings. Table 1 summarizes the profile, duration, strategy, and method of trainings based on LHA and GTA. Established in 1971-1981, they had an average of 43 years OA training experience. Both OFTs had formal agricultural education and came from farming families. Moreover, both serves as key speakers prior to conducting proper trainings. As training methods, laboratory method (LM; where participants will be actively involved by experiencing the technology or innovation through hands-on activity) and inquiry-based method (IBM; OFTs will only share knowledge on specific topics or technology to trainees if they were asked) are identified. On the other hand, researchers and staff serve as resource speakers prior to the LM for the institution.

Table 1 Profile, duration, strategy, and methods of trainings conducted by selected OFTs and institution in Japan

Farm / Institution name	J Institution	S Farm (OFT)	K Farm(OFT)
Resource speaker	Researcher/ Staff	Owner	Owner
Established since	1973	1971	1981
Method of training	Laboratory Method	Laboratory Method Inquiry-Based Method	Laboratory Method Inquiry-Based Method
Training packages	Lecture, Tour, Farm Stay	Lecture, Tour, Farm Stay	Lecture, Tour, Farm Stay
Duration	1 day- 9 mos [1 day=8hrs]	½ day-12 mos [½ day=4 hr]	2-3 years [½ day=4 hr]
Training fee (1day)	¥1,000 (\$8.8 with 2 meals)	¥2,200 (\$19.36)	N/A
Training strategy	Value appreciation then persuasion	OA appreciation and model showcase then persuasion	OA model showcase then persuasion
	History, philosophy, vision, and motto	Food and energy of local production-local consumption	Introduction on OA and its benefits
Training contents	Enrichment of "Food life" through OA	OA philosophy and motivation	Farm history and motivation
	Servant leadership	OA as a cyclical system	Zero-waste farming
	Community-building	Regional collaboration	Plastic tunnel houses
	OA practices	OA practices	Farm integration
Reasons why OA	Safe and sustainable	OA as lifestyle Sustainability in cyclical system	Safe food and production Trust and good farmer-consumer relationship

Source: Field survey, 2017 and 2018

Note: Exchange rate: ¥1=USD0.0088 (Dec 12, 2018)

Table 1 also shows that OFTs and J institution have interrelated innovation that they disseminated interconnected reasons why they conducted OA trainings, and linked motivations to

do trainings. Interestingly, all training strategies led to persuasion but differed from the initial focus (e.g. value appreciation, OA appreciation, and model showcase). Moreover, they focus on OA technologies specifically to attain sustainability. Food safety and sustainability are their common denominators as reasons to conduct OA trainings. LHA application on the life experiences of OFTs leads to the clear understanding of their motivations, philosophy, and reasons to conduct trainings.

LHA and GTA in J Institution: The J Institution focused on sustainable agriculture which utilizes methods of integrated OF to help uplift the poor peoples' living condition. Trainings on servant leadership (emphasizing on leader who serves and works at the level of the people, and inspires, motivate and empower them), and how to organize and develop their community (emphasizing on ways to persuade the whole community to participate fully in decision making and contribution abilities) were also included. One training batch commonly involves 30 selected individuals. The institution believes that working, teaching, and learning together for nine months will provide trainees mutual growth and experiences.

The concept of "learning by doing" is also employed to encourage the application of the knowledge they gained during lectures and field trips. Moreover, the idea of "food life" is the center of their training. Trainees also enjoyed the experience of sharing meals prepared from their community farm where every member puts efforts to grow and produce crops and livestock.

This study found that the selected institution conducts trainings to provide servant leaders the capacity to uplift living conditions of poor people through sustainable integrated OA guided by the idea of "food life" towards the community empowerment.

LHA and GTA in S Farm: This OFT shared his motivation and OA philosophy, farm development process and practices, and how OA transformed his community through the years. Training observation revealed that FT was highly determined to encourage the community and other stakeholders by unconditionally sharing his OA knowledge and experiences. He also offered farm stays to any individual including the youth who wish to learn and/or engage in sustainable and integrated OA. He is also involved in *Teikei* system, a mutually beneficial relationship between producers and farmers. Aside from these, OFT proactively supports different OA promotion activities not only in his community but also in the whole country. He also emphasized that community adoption is the key to create an impact.

His determination, philosophy, experiences and motivation are the reasons why he conducts trainings and support different OA activities.

LHA and GTA in K Farm: Participation, observation, and interview revealed that the main objective and mission of this farm are to educate new farmers and assist them in putting up their own organic farm, respectively. OFT commonly gives a short lecture about the farm history and diseases, and nutritional contents of their organic crops. LHA revealed that they have engaged in OA because it is safe for humans and the environment, and they are also involved in *Teikei* system. He has been motivated because "Many people are interested to do OA, and they just need someone to assist them," which he personally encountered.

Farmer-trainers in the Philippines

Aside from the institutions in Laguna, C Farm and A Farm are the two major organic farms that conducts trainings, owned by the two farmer-scientists. Table 2 summarizes the profile, duration, strategy and method of trainings based on LHA and GTA. In institutions, researcher and extension agent (EA) serve as speakers, while owner and/or training staff serve as speakers in the private farms. Agricultural background, method of trainings, training duration and packages also varied. Related innovations and training contents mainly focused on OA technologies to attain sustainability. It was also observed that training strategies led to persuasion but differed from the attention such as appreciation, model showcase, and provision of options. Food safety was the common denominator of trainers for their reasons to conduct OA trainings.

Table 2 Profile, duration, strategy, and methods of trainings conducted by selected OFTs and institution in the Philippines

Farm / Institution Name	P Institution	C Farm (OFT)	A Farm (OFT)
Resource speaker	Researcher/ EA	Owner, Training Staff	Owner, Training Staff
Established since	2008	2005	1987 (OA since 2007)
Method of training	Laboratory Method	Inquiry-Based Method	Inquiry-Based Method
Training packages	Lecture, Tour, Hands-on	Tour, Lecture	Tour, Lecture
Duration	10 sessions (8 hr/session)	1 day - 6 months	1 day - 6 months
Training fee (1 day)	Free	Php 1,275 (\$24.23)	Government-funded
Training strategy	OA appreciation then persuasion	OA model showcase then persuasion	provision of options then persuasion
Training contents	Definition, history, importance of OA Natural farm inputs Seed Production	Definition, advantages of OA, farm history Zero-waste farming Vermicomposting Farm integration	Definition, advantages of OA, farm history Zero-waste farming Fruit propagation Farm integration
Reason why OA	Safe and sustainable	Safe and sustainable No feeding of toxics to own family	Safe food and production, Trust and good farmer-consumer relationship

Source: Field Survey, 2017 and 2018

Note: Exchange rate: Php1=USD 0.019 (Dec 12, 2018)

LHA and GTA in P Institution: LHA revealed that P institution “starts training by appreciation then persuasion,” conveying that farmer needs to appreciate first what they are doing for them to understand the importance of each technical or theoretical lecture in the training. After understanding the importance, persuasion is done using video presentations and true-to-life story sharing. Technical discussions of innovation will follow and focus on production of natural farm inputs such as bio pesticide, botanical concoctions as fertilizers, and how the farmers can produce their own seeds. The trainer from the institution also added that “Farmers are proud of themselves as they were given a chance to uplift their morale and boost their confidence. Every time they share their experiences, they feel important.” These were some of the observations she encountered during the interaction with the farmers. These were also the reasons why she continues to conduct trainings on OA.

LHA and GTA in C Farm: Initially, C farm harvests were only for family consumption to feed their children fresh, nutritious, toxic- and chemicals-free food. With no farming background, OFT had difficulty in starting OA. They even needed to go abroad to attend trainings and to adopt different technologies. Since most Filipino farmers do not have the capacity or means to study abroad and attend trainings, OFT decided to share their learnings and technologies to farmers and interested individuals. Moreover, their own experiences and struggles motivated them to share what they know through trainings.

LHA and GTA in A Farm: A Farm also catered to farmer-participants in their farm. Their philosophy and motivations pushed them to conduct training and share what they discovered to other farmers. They also have the passion and hope that there will be more people who can benefit and enjoy the advantages of OA, while ensuring safe food for the consumer and safe management production for the farmer and environment. This OFT believe that OA creates trust and good farmer-consumer relationships.

Comparison Between OFT in Japan and the Philippines

LHA and GTA revealed that OFTs in Japan and the Philippines have varied training methods, packages, duration, and contents. Japanese OFTs have formal education as agricultural background, while Filipino OFTs only have trainings and experiences of experimentation in their farm. Different training strategies were identified but all led to persuasion in adopting OA practices. All OFTs in both countries are motivated and recognized the importance of OA in food

and environmental safety, and sustainability. Japanese OFTs are hands-on trainers as they personally conduct every training that utilizes both laboratory method and inquiry-based learning method to ensure that their trainees really understood and can apply what they learned. On the other hand, the Filipino OFTs need support of their respective staff in conducting trainings and are focused on inquiry-based method. Therefore, their technology or innovations, reasons of practicing OA, and philosophy and motivations are interrelated.

CONCLUSION

Based on observations and interviews, this study concludes that OFTs in Japan and the Philippines have varied training methods, packages, duration, strategy, and contents. In contrast, their technology or innovations, reasons, and philosophy and motivations of practicing and conducting trainings in OA, are interrelated and basically grounded in disseminating the advantages of OA in safe food and production, environment conservation, and attainment of sustainability to further persuade adaptors.

In general, it can also be concluded that being hands-on farmer-trainers in Japan that utilizes both laboratory method and inquiry-based learning method, guarantees a better understanding and application of the subject matter to another farmers. Filipino OFT should consider and adopt the philosophy and uniqueness on how Japanese OFT conduct the trainings and impact the community.

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