Indian Journal of Extension Education
Vol. 53, No. 2, 2017 (93-96)

Teachers' Values for the Profession in Agricultural Higher Education System

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ABSTRACT

Values an individual holds play an important role in personal life as well as professional life. In this study an attempt was made for identifying the values held by agricultural teachers in the selected universities viz., ICAR- IARI, New Delhi; ICAR- NDRI, Karnal; TNAU, Coimbatore; and UAS, Bangalore. A standard Likert-type scale was developed for assessing the values held by teachers. Most of the teachers gave similar responses and they valued more strongly the ability to share experiences and knowledge with students.

Key words: Values, Teachers, Agriculture, Profession

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture still remains the backbone of Indian economy employing about 51 per cent of the work force. The cradle of the Indian agricultural success, besides Government policies and high receptivity of the farming community, has been the establishment of institutions. The agricultural education institutions develop skilled human resources; instrumental not only in generating new technologies but also in their assessment, refinement and dissemination to the farming community. In future, the educational system must develop the human capital necessary to help Indian agriculture face the broad set of challenges including issues of food security and increasing living standards of the masses. The agricultural education system needs to be reoriented to cater to the needs of the emerging sectors and to ensure that excess manpower is not generated in slow growing sectors (Graham, 2001). Hence there is a need to continuously strive for excellence in education.

The purpose of agricultural education is to develop a love and understanding for agriculture, educating students and adults as to its importance, and the promotion of literacy throughout educational and community systems (Dailey *et al.,* 2001). According to Osborne (2011), to take agricultural education to the next level, there is a need to embrace the notion that agricultural education is a single, broad, social and behavioral science discipline that includes teaching and learning in formal and non-formal settings; reaching widely varied target audiences through interpersonal, group and mass communications; and strengthening the leadership capacity and effectiveness of individuals and organizations. Likewise, McCracken (1983) advocated that agricultural education should be further developed as a profession. Thus in agricultural education profession, there should be leaders who will work together as a team in charting a new course for the future agriculture. Leaders in agriculture profession should work together in charting the nature of programs. Similarly, Shinn and Cheek (1981) viewed that leaders in agricultural education must be able to synthesize technical agricultural information and plan programs to help solve the problems associated with energy, productivity and world trends in the agricultural industry. Therefore, the agricultural education system needs to be redefined so as to equip the fresh agricultural graduates with subject competency, self-motivation, positive attitude, agri-business skills, knowledge of computer and information technology, and communication skills (Ghadei *et al.,* 2011).

Teachers do it knowingly or unknowingly, good or bad, deliberately or accidently; nonetheless, they make a difference in students' lives. Teachers should value their essentiality for the students, which is sometimes even more than the parents. Taking into consideration the

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importance of the role teachers' play in their students' performance in professional and personal lives, the present investigation was formulated to assess the values held by teachers with respect to teaching profession.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in well recognized and highly reputed Agricultural Universities of India. Following the composite ranking of Indian Agricultural Universities by Career 360 (2014), two Deemed Universities and two State Agricultural Universities were purposefully selected.

The selected universities were: ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), New Delhi (Rating: AAAA+); ICAR-National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI), Karnal (Rating: AAAA); Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Coimbatore (Rating: AAAA) and University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Bangalore (Rating: AAA+).

The respondent agricultural teachers were selected randomly with a condition that at least 20 per cent of the teachers involved in teaching post-graduate and Ph.D. courses shall be selected. Hence, the number of teachers selected from IARI, New Delhi; NDRI, Karnal; TNAU, Coimbatore and UAS, Bangalore were 80, 40, 30 and 30 respectively. Thus, the total sample size was 180 agricultural teachers.

Value, for the present study, was operationalized as the extent of importance and worth agricultural teachers attached for the teaching profession. Thus, a standardized Likert-type scale was developed ('Cronbach's Coefficient alpha' (α) was 0.70) and teachers' responses were recorded on a five-point continuum of 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'neutral', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with the scores of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. Finally, non-parametric tests namely Friedman's test and Kruskal-Wallis (KW) test were used for analyzing the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Friedman's test was used for studying the variation among the values teachers in a university held for teaching. The p-value was found to be less than the table value at five percent significance level. Therefore, it was concluded that there exists a significant difference between the levels of values teachers hold for teaching within a university.

Table 1: Values of teachers for teaching profession in selected universities based on mean ranks as per Friedman's test

Statement	ICAR-IARI (n= 80)		ICAR-NDRI (n= 40)		UAS (n= 30)		TNAU (n= 30)	
	Mean Rank	Rank	Mean Rank	Rank	Mean Rank	Rank	Mean Rank	Rank
I am able to maintain professional relationship with my students and encourage their growth and development	5.88	II	6.00	II	6.25	II	6.03	I
I acknowledge and respect individuality and specific needs of students and therefore provide appropriate learning experience	5.24	V	4.94	VI	5.60	III	5.23	VI
I motivate and inspire students with a view to help each one to realize their own potential	5.84	III	5.95	III	6.63	I	5.88	II
I work with my colleagues to create a professional community that support social, intellectual, moral and emotional development of students	3.59	IX	4.46	VII	3.23	VIII	3.90	VII
I respect my colleagues for their professional standing and opinions	5.43	IV	5.14	V	4.97	VI	5.67	IV
I contribute to the review and revision of policies and practices with a view to optimize the opportunities for students	4.24	VII	3.75	VIII	4.72	VII	3.53	IX
I address the identified institutional needs	3.70	VIII	3.56	IX	2.97	IX	3.63	VIII
I assume responsibility for the professional development of my students	5.04	VI	5.18	IV	5.30	V	5.30	V
My value is not just my experience and knowledge, but also my ability to share that experience and guide a student	6.03	I	6.03	I	5.33	IV	5.82	III
Friedman's test statistics								
Chi- Square	108.262		49.557		72.348		51.587	
df	8		8		8		8	
Asymp. Sig.(p)	0.000		0.000		0.000		.000	

The teachers, both from ICAR-IARI and ICAR-NDRI, have shown that they valued the most their ability to share their experience and guide the students; their ability to maintain a professional relationship with students and encourage students' growth and development; and, their ability to motivate and inspire students in realizing their own potential. Thus, it can be inferred that these are the strongest values that teachers hold in their profession. On similar lines but with a little difference, teachers of UAS, Bangalore have expressed value to acknowledging and respecting individuality as well as providing appropriate learning experience based on the differential needs of students.

Similarly, respondents in all the selected universities have given low mean rank scores for addressing the identified institutional needs; creating professional communities for the development of students; and, review and revision of the policies of the institute for increasing the opportunities of students.

The comparison of the values held by teachers in the selected agricultural universities were analysed using

Kruskal Wallis test. Since the p-value was found to be greater than the value at five percent level of significance (Table 2), it was drawn that there was no significant difference between the values held by teachers in the selected universities. Even if the teachers would have rated the statements differently, but ultimately it is clear from the analysis that the values held by most of the teachers are almost similar.

Table 2: Kruskal Wallis test statistics for values of teachers among selected universities

(n=180)

Category	Values
Chi- Square	1.472
df	3
Asymp. Sig.	0.689

Table 3: Comparison of values of teachers among the selected universities based on mean ranks as per Kruskal Wallis test

Category	n	Mean Rank
ICAR-IARI	80	95.33
ICAR-NDRI	40	87.74
UAS	30	88.85
TNAU	30	82.97
Total	**180**	

All the teachers have responded to show that they valued more strongly the ability to share experiences and knowledge with students probably because teachers are also researchers. They get to learn a great deal from actual experiences, experiments and field situations. The things they learn in field may not even occur in laboratory conditions; therefore, what the field work can teach can never be learned by sitting in office or working in laboratory. Thus, sharing their knowledge from actual experiences can be very much satisfying for the agricultural teachers. Similarly, they valued ability to motivate and inspire learners, which shows that they believe that a teacher has immense power with responsibility.

Teaching is not about imparting knowledge; it is far more than that, it is about inspiring desirable change in the student. This belief might constantly push them to motivate and inspire learners. Furthermore, they valued the professional relationship they have with their students. The bonding a teacher and a student share is special. Teachers act as a mentor for the students. They not only help students mastering subjects but also they shape students' lives.

CONCLUSION

It is clearly visible from the results that teachers value the most is the sharing of knowledge and experience with students; motivating and inspiring learners; and, their professional relationship with their students. According to Hansen (1993), the role of the teacher implies the power to influence students; and even if teachers do not see it as a part of their role to set a moral example, it seems unlikely that students will be able to avoid the influence of teachers' values completely, since values are inherent in teaching (Carr, 1993). The very reason behind teaching being an attractive profession is the responsibility of molding students' professional behavior.

Paper received on : June 12, 2017
Accepted on : June 19, 2017

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