

TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ABOUT RAWE PROGRAMMEA. K. Bandyopadhyay¹ & Shantanu Kar²

If breaking the monotony of my conventional learning process gets imbued with a joy of intense delight the RAWE (Rural Agriculture works Experience) programme has marked the beginning of a new journey for a horizon. At the same time on another front we find demographic Compulsion and declining per capita natural resource availability that makes it clear that India will have to produce more and more form products from less and less land and water as we proceed into the new millennium. This revelation presents a monumental challenge to the farmers and rests a great responsibility on the shoulder of our Scientistis for development of new technologies for agricultural development and the extension specialists for their dissemination and securing adoption by the farmers.

In retrospective we observe that the Indian agricultural universities, since their very inception has contributed to the nation a large resource of trained technical manpower for agricultural development. The teaching functions of these universities by their painful efforts and diligence have groomed the students right from the very basics to the most delicate and complicated aspects of agricultural advancements through theoretical and practical orientations. To integrate the student's competence and their skills and to enhance their confidence to face the real life situation, one full semester of RAWE have been inculcated into their course curriculum. The RAWE course exposed the students to farm life and brought them direct contact with the ground realities of farming in actual farm situation. The objectives of this study are as follows :-

1. To find out the usefulness and utility of RAWE programme as perceived by the teachers and students.
2. To find out their opinion, experience gained, problems faced and suggestion for improvement were mainly considered in this study.

METHODOLOGY :

To fulfill the objectives of this study 50 students who have completed RAWE last year were selected randomly and 25 teachers form different discipline who participated actively and guided the students during the RAWE programme were selected for the study.

A structured interview schedule was developed for collection of information from the respondents, through personal interview method. Percentage distribution was calculated for interpretation of the result.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION :

After analysis and interpretation of different information the following results have been presented and discussed below.

From table 1, it can be concluded that 100 percent of the students gained experiences ragarding practical knowledge of many agricultural activities, many participatory approaches involved in PRA, about farmers, farm women and children, their life style and ivolvement in various agricultural operations and experienced the difference between the theoretical and practical knowledge. 92 percent of the students gained knowledge, about the innovative ideas developed

Table 1. Experience gained by the students in RAWE Programme

Sl. No.	Experience	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Practical knowledge about many agricultural activities	50	100%
2.	Experience regarding the use of the techniques of PRA	50	100%
3.	Experience related to farmers, farm women and children, their lifestyle as participation in agril. operations.	50	100%
4.	Experience regarding the role of different institutions	50	100%
5.	Experience that theoretical knowledge differs from practical knowledge	50	100%
6.	Knowledge of the innovative ideas developed by the farmers	46	92%
7.	Learning skills involved in some agril. practices	46	92%
8.	Knowledge of Animal Husbandry and the factors owing to the decreasing trend in the number of the farm animals	46	92%
9.	Knowledge about farm economics and calculation of cost of cultivation of different crops and analysis of the expenditure on farm activities.	40	90%
10.	Experience about different indigenous knowledge of the farmers	40	90%
11.	Experience of conducting group discussions & farmers' meeting	38	76%
12.	Experience that helped to improve the communication skills	36	72%
13.	Experience of soil testing	36	72%
14.	Knowledge of retting of Jute	34	68%
15.	Knowledge of women's activities in raising kitchen garden	33	66%
16.	Knowledge of Piciculture	30	60%
17.	Knowledge of handicrafts	21	42%
18.	Experience about orchard management and also planting of fruit trees near houses for additional income	10	20%

by the farmers in terms of pest and disease control, pollination of flowers of vegetables, seed treatment, soil enrichment etc. 90 percent of the students have experience of farm economics and calculation of cost of cultivation of different crops and analysis of the expenditure in farm activities and experience of different indigenous knowledge of the farmers. About 70 to 80 percent of the students have experience of conducting group discussions and farmer's meeting, and getting an insight of the intricacies involved in communication skills and experience of soil testing. 60-70 percent of the students gained knowledge about retting of Jute, role of women in raising kitchen garden and knowledge of raising fish, 42 percent of the students gained knowledge of women's involvement in making cane baskets, mats and quilt etc. And last but not the least about 20 percent of the students had experience about orchard management and planting of fruit trees near houses for additional income.

Again it was seen that during the period of RAWE the students faced some problems, which are presented in decreasing order on the basis of their priority. Table 2 presents the problems faced by the students where it was seen that 100 percent of the students had problems in meeting their respondents in the scheduled morning hours which was not suitable, again the same number felt that the period of RAWE is too short and hence limits the scope of getting maximum exposure. 80 percent considered the misconception among the farmers that the students were Govt. officials that proved to be a limiting factor in drawing out valuable information. For 80 percent of the students lack of teacher's participation and the continuous effort that the students had to put on ice breaking or explaining the purpose of their visit all through the programme was a problem. The lack of prior field experience, lack of tact in conversation and the competition among the farmers that limits flow of information were some problems faced by 76 percent, 68 percent and 66 percent of the students respectively. 58 percent of the students felt that lack of sincerity in keeping appointments has resulted in losing farmer's confidence and

was a serious problem. 48 percent of the students faced problems in establishing rapport with the farmers. Again 38 percent of the boys felt that the suspicious attitude of the parents of young girls towards them restricted the conversations to a very short time, 30 percent of the students felt there was poor coordination between them and lastly 24 percent of the students stated that the irregularity of the teachers and lack of interest on their part limited the smooth functioning of RAWE.

Table 2. Problems faced by the students during RAWE Programme

Sl. No.	Problems	Frequency	Percentage
1.	The time for interaction with the farmers is not suitable in the Morning hrs.	50	100%
2.	The period of RAWE programme is too short and hence limits the scope of getting maximum exposure	50	100%
3.	Misunderstanding among farmers that the students are govt. official prevent them from disclosing their assets. And the farmers expect some sort of benefit from students	42	80%
4.	Lack of teachers in active participation during RAWE programme	40	80%
5.	Ice breaking proved to be a continuous and everlasting episode because each day the purpose had to be explained to each new farmer	40	80%
6.	Lack of prior field experience	38	76%
7.	Lack of experience in conversation	34	68%
8.	Competition among farmers limits flow of information	33	66%
9.	Lack of sincerity in keeping appointments results in losing of farmer's confidence	29	58%
10.	Problems in establishing rapport with farmers	24	48%
11.	Suspicious attitude of the parents of young girls towards boys	19	38%
12.	Poor co-ordination among students	15	30%
13.	Irregularity of teachers and lack of interest on their part.	12	24%

Table 3. Teacher's opinion about RAWE Programme

Sl. No.	Statement	In Support	Against
1.	Every teacher should know the objectives of RAWE	96%	4%
2.	The duration of the RAWE programme should be for at least six months	76%	24%
3.	RAWE is purely an extension programme	28%	72%
4.	All teachers should participate in RAWE programme	80%	20%
5.	Students should stay in village during RAWE	84%	16%
6.	Strong co-ordination between teachers, students and administration is required for successful implementation of RAWE	100%	-
7.	Everyday teacher's participation with students is must	60%	40%
8.	All the perspectives related to the information about farmer's life should be covered in the stipulated time	76%	24%
9.	Group leaders must have sound co-ordination with other members	96%	4%
10.	day to day student evaluation is necessary	60%	40%
11.	Teacher's involvement with students is must when students interact with farmers	44%	56%
12.	Selection of village requires involvement of both teachers and students	64%	36%
13.	Multidisciplinary approach should be followed	92%	8%
14.	At the time of data analysis and reporting each member of the group should be present with students	80%	20%
15.	For a successful programme, strong interaction with the farmers, seven days prior to the programme implementation should be taken up	92%	8%
16.	University field extension wing should be involved for day-to-day work supervision	52%	48%
17.	Demonstration of different crops should be organized at farmer's farm situation with involvement of both theachers & students	92%	8%
18.	Each and every teacher should know the different tools or methods for collecting information from farmers' level	80%	20%
19.	Time for interaction with farmers should be in the morning/evening	16%	84%
20.	It is an extension programme; so only extension people is responsible for RAWE	4%	96%

The monitoring group of teachers comprising of experts from various fields were interviewed personally through a questionnaire consisting of 20 closed end questions and two open ended questions to draw out additional information and suggestions for improvement. The opinion is presented in table 3.

From table 3. it is revealed that, 96 percent of the teachers expressed their opinion that every teacher should know the objectives of RAWE.

76 percent felt that the duration of the RAWE programme should be for at least six months and the majority among these teacher's felt that the duration should extend to around 12 months to cover all crops.

28 percent of the teachers consider RAWE purely as an extension programme but the majority i.e. 72 percent felt otherwise. 80 percent of the teachers advocated the participation of all the teachers in RAWE and suggested that it can be ensured by involving the teachers in rotation basis. But the remaining 20 percent did not consider it necessary to involve all teachers.

Again 84 percentage of the teachers considered that students should stay in the village during the RAWE programme but 16 percent did not consider it necessary.

Cent percent of the teachers supported that a strong coordination between teachers, students and administration is required for successful implementation of RAWE. 60 percent of the teachers felt that every day teacher's participation with the students is required to monitor all the activities but 40 percent felt that the students should collect information and they should bring their problems to the teacher for clarification and solving the problems. 76 percent of the teachers felt that all the perspectives related to the information about farmer's life should be covered in the stipulated time where as 24 percent of the teachers considered that it is not possible to cover all aspects within 6 months. 96 percent of the teachers advocated that a sound coordination of the group leaders with other members is essential. The majority of the teachers felt that at an interval of 15 to 20 days, teachers must sit together to discuss the problems and to chalk out a programme. 60 percent of the teachers considered that day-to-day student evaluation is required which can be done chapter wise/weekly. But 40 percent of the teachers felt that it is difficult in field work as field work is situational. 44 percent of the teachers felt that teacher's involvement with students is must during their interaction with farmers to provide expert guidance and instant solution to problems whereas 56 percent of the teachers felt that the students should be left on their own to learn by themselves, which would enhance their confidence. 64 percent of the teachers felt that selection of village requires the participation of both teachers and students, which would include all crops under different land situation and all type of farmers. But 36 percent of the teachers did not consider the involvement of teachers and students necessary because it is entirely the responsibility of field extension wing. 92 percent of the teachers considered that a multidisciplinary approach is required to be followed with equal participation of all the departments but 8 percent of the teachers felt that a multidisciplinary approach is not required. 80 percent of the teachers expressed their opinion that at the time of data analysis and reporting each member of the group should be present with the students to prepare an effective report, whereas 20 percent of the teachers felt that they have no role to play at that stage. 92 percent of the teachers advocated a strong interaction with the farmers seven days prior to programme implementation, to develop a strong rapport between students and farmers. 52 percent of the teachers felt that the field extension wing should be involved in day-to-day work supervision. But 48 percent of the respondents felt that the field extension wing

is responsible for preliminary survey and site selection for RAWE programme only. Again 92 percent of the teachers felt that demonstration of different crops should be organized at farmer's farm situation with the involvement of both teachers and students at different crop seasons. 4 percent of the teacher considered that RAWE is an extension programme so only extension people is responsible for RAWE but the majority i.e. 96 percent advocated that it is a multi-disciplinary approach and extension. Teachers are responsible to coordinate the whole process.

Solutions and suggestion by the students to overcome the problems are as follows :-

1. The duration of RAWE should be strictly of six months and if possible, for 1 yr. The period should be such that the students can get experience of different crops in different cropping seasons.
2. In the first week, the students should be allowed to establish rapport with the farmers so that they can convince them that they are not govt. employees, they are student and have come to learn from them.
3. The experts should be made free of their academic work on their date of visit.
4. An experimental plot should be provided to each student at village level.
5. Farmer's meeting, get-together, soil-testing programme should be done in villages.
6. Field visit to the area of programme should be conducted for the students to have prior field knowledge and this would help in establishing rapport with the farmers.
7. More clustered villages should be selected.
8. Provisions for camping in villages should be made.

Teacher's suggestions for Improvement of RAWE : The following suggestions made by the teachers in order to the improvement of RAWE programme. These are :-

1. The duration of RAWE programme should be strictly of six months and efforts should be taken to extend it to one year.
2. Physically as well as mentally prepared teachers only should participate in RAWE.
3. Time for interaction with the farmer should be according to the choice of the farmer as, for each individual farmers the time of leisure is different.
4. There should be a common group/team of teachers for uniform evaluation.
5. Performance of the co-ordinating cell must be improved.
6. Maximum emphasis should be given on student's attendance.
7. A demonstration programme should be done, including different aspects such as organic farming/effective plant protection measures at minimum cost/HYV and hybrid variety trial and their management etc. at farmer's situation.
8. The RAWE programme should be spread throughout the state is possible; it should not be within the area already selected by the field extension wing.
9. Student's rotation of different parts of the state from different campus should be administered to acquaint the students with the total geography of the state.
10. Students should be tagged with different developmental organizations like FCI or NGO's for first 3-4 months, for the rest 2-3 months the students should be attached to the University as such for formal evaluation.
11. Weekly meetings with participation of teachers of each group, students and farmers should be organized.

12. All the teachers (teaching, research and extension) must be involved in RAWE on rotational basis (2-3 yrs. Rotation). The long experienced teachers must be associated with the young teachers.
13. The teachers should consider RAWE as a practical class or field practical. His role is to assist the students in the learning process.
14. The extension wing should involve other teachers prior to selection of site and the grouping of teachers must be based on specialization.
15. The course and curriculum should be reviewed thoroughly to incorporate more action-oriented programme.
16. A profile of years to be concentrated on a single cluster of villages to get a pattern of changes.
17. Gender issues are not adequately addressed in the entire process.
18. Experts may visit other Universities to get an empirical experience.
19. Impact study and content analysis over the activities and documented information shall have to be done to formulate more effective RAWE programme.
20. The group leaders along with associated teachers should sit together with the coordination cell chairman, RAWE programme to draw guidelines so that the merit of the students can be judged properly without showing any special favour to the concerned group with which the particular group of teachers are attached.
21. The reports are to be prepared in phases.
22. The students should definitely stay in the villages for the RAWE programme and proper and strict care should be taken for their food and accommodation. It should also be ensured that the students face no difficulty in working with the farmers so far social behaviour is concerned.

CONCLUSION :

In order to conclude, it can be asserted that the RAWE programme has been successful in its objective of providing meaningful practical experience to the students, as is evident from the results.

The problems faced by the students call our attention and must be attempted to be resolved. The solutions and suggestions made by the teachers and students provide valuable guidelines on the areas, which call out attention to ensure better functioning and for developing a comprehensive RAWE programme, although some solutions may be costly and difficult. Never the less it will solve all most all the problems.

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