

Perceptions on Experiential Learning: A Study of Agriculture Students

Sajeev M.V.¹ and K. Narayana Gowda²

1. Scientist (Agril. Ext.), Directorate of Cashew Research, (ICAR), Darbe, Puttur (Karnataka),

2. Vice Chancellor, University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, Karnataka

Corresponding author e-mail: sajeevmv@yahoo.co.in

ABSTRACT

The inadequacy of the agricultural curricula of Under-Graduate degree programme in India to provide adequate level of professional competencies was often commented upon. This led to the development of a rigorous field programme with emphasis on practical reorientation of farm students to the rural agricultural operation systems and totality of farm life. A new course, Rural Agricultural Work Experience (RAWE) Programme was introduced in the Agricultural Universities in India, which emphasizes on 'learning through experience' and facilitates the students to completely understand the rural scenario. The Kerala Agricultural University (KAU), Vellanikkara, introduced RAWE for its B.Sc. (Agriculture) degree programme during 1999-2000. This pioneer study about RAWE was undertaken to study the extent to which the objectives of the programme are fulfilled as perceived by students at KAU, to find out the profile of students and its relationship with their perception and to seek suggestions from students for effective implementation. The findings revealed that the RAWE programme was highly successful in improving the communication and leadership skills of students along with providing an opportunity to work in agri-based industries but was weak in providing practical experience in crop production at field level and get acquainted with the on-going TOT programmes. Rural-urban background, medium of instruction, achievement motivation, leadership qualities and mass media usage had a positive significance while educational level of parents, annual income of family and self-confidence had negatively significant relationship with perception. The suggestions given by students include increasing the duration of each module, matching RAWE with cropping season, increasing the stipend and providing it in time and keeping away student politics at least in RAWE.

Key words : Students' perception; RAWE; Agriculture;

Agricultural education is basically aimed to develop skilled manpower to take up farming, undertaking research, teaching and extension work for agricultural development in the Indian context. The inadequacy of the agricultural curricula of Under-Graduate degree programme in India to provide adequate level of professional competencies has been often commented upon. The Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India (Anon, 1928) stated that complaints were made to them by some cultivators that the training given in Agricultural Colleges were not sufficiently practical. They noted the inability of agricultural demonstrators to handle bullock or to plough properly and recommended provision of further facilities for obtaining practical experience.

One of the greatest educationists of India, Dr. Radhakrishnan (Anon, 1948) noted that

bookishness has greatly limited the value of agricultural education. So agricultural education should be given a rural setting, so that it includes direct participation and experience with agricultural life and practice. Later he emphasized that work experience to be provided to senior class students in real life situations, such as work on farms at the time of sowing or planting or harvesting or in a family production unit and the opportunities of this kind are to be utilized to the maximum extent possible. Such work experience should match with the local situations. (Anon, 1966).

All these requisites necessitated the remodeling and development of new pedagogic tools in agricultural education, which is the foundation for future agricultural development. This led to the development of a rigorous field programme with emphasis on practical reorientation of farm students to the rural agricultural

operation systems and totality of farm life. The students should get exposed to these existing realities of a typical rural setup through interconnected exercises of skill development so as to identify the practical possibilities of academic knowledge in the field. In this context, a new course, Rural Agricultural Work Experience (RAWE) Programme was introduced in the Agricultural Universities in India, viewed as the best opportunity, which can orient and equip the required potential among the students of agricultural sciences. The RAWE is a course organized by State Agricultural Universities normally in the final (VIII) semester of under-graduate degree programme. This course emphasizes on 'learning through experience' and facilitates the students to completely understand the rural scenario.

The Andhra Pradesh Agricultural University, Hyderabad, was the first to introduce RAWE in its curriculum as early as in 1980-81. This was close on the heels with the recommendations of the *Review Committee on Agricultural Universities (1978)*, popularly known as Randhawa committee recommendations. *Raman (1993)* observed that lack of rural orientation has become all the more important now than earlier. The farm graduates few decades back used to come from rural background and had prior experience of agriculture, rural life and village situations. But now sizable number of students are coming from urban background, diversity of crops and problems are unique to each situation.

The *World Bank (1995a)* stated that there was little emphasis in the curricula on preparing the under graduates for career in agriculture or Agri-business outside government service. However, the opportunities in the government stream are drying up and private employers often have to invest considerable time, money and effort on induction and on the job training for the graduates to make up for educational weaknesses. The graduates from SAUs exhibit lack of confidence in their ability to apply the skills necessary for self-employment.

The Third Deans Committee under the chairmanship of *Keerti Singh (1995b)* advocated the introduction of RAWE in all the State Agricultural Universities in India and laid down the specific objectives for the programme. Almost all the state agricultural universities in India have started implementing RAWE.

The Kerala Agricultural University (KAU), Vellanikkara, introduced RAWE for its B.Sc (Agri) degree programme during 1999-2000 with the following objectives.

1. To equip the agriculture graduates with a clear vision about the rural community, inter dependence of its biophysical factors, farming system and farming.
2. To help the students familiarize with the socio economic conditions of the farmers and their problems with reference to agricultural development.
3. To develop communication skills among students using extension teaching methods in transfer of technology.
4. To inculcate the ability among students to prepare development projects/ programmes to suit the local situation in consultation with farmers.
5. To develop confidence and professional competence among students to solve problems and handle the present and emerging demands of agricultural sector.

Since the inception of RAWE at KAU, the same model is implemented which consists of the following eight modules;

Module	Duration
Orientation and interaction session	1 week
Farm planning and watershed management analysis	2 weeks
Village stay programme and panchayat level analysis	3 weeks
Agro clinics covering different crop zones	1 week
Experiential learning of NGO activities	1 week
Training at Krishi Bhavans	1 week
Entrepreneurship Development Programme analysis	3 weeks
Training at Research station and KVK	2 weeks

The entire span of RAWE is of 21 weeks and carries 0+8 credits.

The RAWE is probably the single most powerful pedagogic tool available and can be used to enhance student learning in several ways. Constant refinement and improvement is needed with a view to making it more holistic and suited to the needs of the future implementation. Keeping the above aspects in view, this study in the field of RAWE was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To study the extent to which the objectives of RAWE Programme are fulfilled as perceived by students at KAU.
2. To find out the profile of students and its relationship with their perception.
3. To seek suggestions from students for effective implementation.

METHODOLOGY

KAU has three colleges offering B.Sc (Agri.) viz. College of Agriculture, Vellayani at Thiruvananthapuram, College of Horticulture, Vellanikkara at the central campus in Thrissur and the College of Agriculture, Padannakkad at Kasargod. All the three colleges conduct RAWE at the same time based on common model. The sample size was 50 and the respondents were randomly selected considering the male: female ratio from all the three colleges. An ex-post-facto research design was employed as the RAWE was already implemented and the data were collected from the students based on their past experience. A well-structured questionnaire was developed incorporating all the items and keeping the objectives in view. The questionnaires were mailed to identified students and for few given personally. Statistical tools like simple frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Extent of achievement of RAWE objectives as perceived by students; It can be seen in Table 1 that, almost all of the students fully agreed that RAWE has improved their communication skills (98%), while around three-fourth of them fully agreed on getting opportunities to work with various agro-based industries (78%) and improvement in leadership skills (74%). A great majority fully agreed to understanding of rural situations, farmer's

problems, improvement in diagnostic skills and getting competency to prepare farm plans / projects (72%). While two-third of them fully agreed the understanding of socioeconomic conditions of farmers (66%), majority of them fully agreed on getting familiarity of rural life, exposed to role models in agriculture and developing confidence and professional competency (52%). Nearly two-fifth of students fully understood village situations and farmer's problems (38%) and got practical training in crop production (42%). While one-third of them fully understood adoption patterns and adoption gaps (32%), only eight percent could get fully acquainted with on going transfer of technology (TOT) programmes in agriculture.

It can be clearly noted from the above findings that improvement in communication skills was rated as the most achieved objective followed by an opportunity to work with various agro-based industries and improvement in leadership skills.

The possible reason is that extension faculty both on the campus and off the campus shoulders major part of the RAWE work. There will be continuous guidance by the extension teachers particularly at the village level, but it is need based as far as other disciplines are concerned. Since the major share of activities in RAWE is of extension only, it is natural to find high rating by students for gain in communication skills.

With respect to leadership skills, KAU has devised

Table 1. Perception regarding extent of achievement of RAWE objectives (N=50)

Statements	FA		SWA		NA	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
RAWE has helped me to get familiar with rural life	26	52	19	38	5	10
RAWE has helped me to understand village situations	19	38	31	62	0	0
RAWE has helped me to understand rural institutions	36	72	4	8	10	20
RAWE has helped me to understand the socio economic conditions of farmers	33	66	13	26	4	8
RAWE has helped me to understand adoption patterns and adoption gaps	16	32	28	56	6	12
RAWE has helped me to understand farmers' problems	36	72	14	28	0	0
RAWE has helped me to understand farming systems and farming	19	38	27	54	4	8
RAWE has helped to improve my diagnostic skills	36	72	14	28	0	0
RAWE provided me practical training in crop production	21	42	23	46	6	12
RAWE has improved my communication skills	49	98	1	2	0	0
RAWE has improved my leadership qualities	37	74	13	26	0	0
RAWE provided me opportunity to work with various Agri based institutions	39	78	11	22	0	0
RAWE has given me competency to prepare farm plans for individual farm families	36	72	12	24	2	4
RAWE provided opportunity for me to meet role models in agriculture and increase my confidence	26	52	13	26	11	22
RAWE helped me to get acquainted with on going TOT programmes in agriculture	4	8	34	68	12	24
RAWE developed confidence and professional competence in me to solve field problems	26	52	24	48	0	0

FA- Fully Agree, SWA- Some What Agree, NA - Not Agree

over the period a standardized procedure by way of facilitating every student to get an opportunity to work as leader at one point of time or other. For example, students are made into various committees before going to villages. These committees are like programme committee, cultural committee and food committee. All the students are made to shoulder the responsibilities at one point or other as leader in these committees. Since the group size is less, a student has greater chance to become a leader in his group at one or other point and hence the development of leadership quality.

Opportunity to work with various agro-based industries was placed at second. Exposure to agro-based industries is minimum during campus routine. But in RAWE they get a chance to learn well about such industries, which made them to rate it as second. The students also felt that a good performance in agri-based institutions may land them in a job in some agro-based industries. This has made them to participate more actively in this module and rating it as second. The success of the module reiterates the World Bank recommendations stated earlier.

Since the problems of farmers which students observed in RAWE were beyond their imaginations, it served as an eye opener for them and was rated as fourth. Campus practical sessions rarely gave a touch of real field situations. The component farmer was missing there. In RAWE the students got an opportunity to see 'real' farmers and understand their problems, which acted as a rich experience to them.

Profile of students and its relationship with their perception: The profile of students is given in Table 2 and 3.

Sex : Females dominated with majority (62%) followed by males with 38 per cent of sample population. Interestingly the ratio has increased over the period with the constant increase of girl students at KAU.

Rural-urban background : Majority (62%) of the students belonged to urban background while the remaining 38 per cent were from rural background. Even the students coming from rural background had limited knowledge of rural settings. This demands the necessity of the programme to provide better rural orientation in general and live situations of agriculture in particular.

Education level of parents: Nearly fifty per cent (48%) of students had parents with high education level, 22 per cent with medium education level and 30 per cent with low education level.

Occupation of parents : The study revealed that ten per cent of students had their father doing agriculture,

great majority (70%) of them were Government employees and eight per cent were in private enterprises, four per cent in business and eight per cent doing other jobs. The mothers of eight per cent students were in agriculture, majority (52%) in Government job and none in private job and business and 40 per cent were housewives. The necessity for RAWE stems from the present status of their parent's occupation to provide better rural orientation.

Annual income of the family : One-fifth (20%) of the students belong to families with annual income of over 2 lakh /annum (high category), two-fifth (40%) belonged to families with 1-2 lakh/annum (medium category) and two-fifth (40%) belonged to families with annual income of less than 1 lakh/annum (low category).

Leadership qualities : The study showed that 24 per cent of students had high level of leadership qualities, 44 per cent had medium level and 32 per cent had low level of leadership qualities.

Medium of instruction : The study shows that 38 per cent of the students did their schooling up to 10th standard in Malayalam medium (i.e. regional language of Kerala state of Indian union) and 48 per cent in English

Table 2. Personal and socio economic characteristics of students

Characteristics	Category	No.	%	
<i>Sex</i>	Male	19	38	
	Female	31	62	
<i>Rural-urban Background</i>	Rural	19	38	
	Urban	31	62	
<i>Education level of Parents</i>	Low: <10.79	15	30	
	Medium: b/w 10.79 – 12.57	11	22	
	High:>12.57	24	48	
<i>Occupation of Parents</i>	<i>Agriculture</i>	Father	5	10
		Mother	4	8
		<i>Govt. Employee</i>	Father	35
<i>Private</i>	Mother	26	52	
	Father	4	8	
<i>Business</i>	Mother	0	0	
	Father	2	4	
<i>Others</i>	Mother	0	0	
	Father	4	8	
<i>Annual income of family</i>	Mother	20	40	
	Low: < 1 lakh	20	40	
	Medium: b/w 1 –2 lakh	20	40	
<i>Leadership qualities</i>	High: >2 lakh	10	20	
	Low: < 64.73	16	32	
	Medium: b/w 64.73 – 72.71	22	44	
	High:>72.71	12	24	

medium, none of them did primary and middle schooling in Malayalam and later high school in English medium and 14 per cent did primary in Malayalam, middle and high schools in English. The necessity of orienting students in Malayalam at the time of on-campus orientation can be noted here.

Overall grade point average (OGPA): At KAU, 24 per cent had high OGPA, majority (50%) had medium OGPA and 26 per cent had low OGPA.

Aspiration level : One-fifth (20%) of the students had high level of aspiration, majority (66%) had medium level of aspiration and 14 per cent had low level of aspiration.

Self confidence : Two-fifth (40%) of the students had high level of self-confidence, 38 per cent had medium level and 22 per cent had low level of self-confidence.

Achievement motivation : At KAU, 32 per cent of students were having high level of achievement motivation, 26 per cent medium level of achievement motivation and 42 per cent had low level of achievement motivation.

Mass media usage : The results indicate that 32 per cent of students had high level of mass media use, 28 per cent had medium level of mass media use and two-fifth (40%) had low level.

Table 3. Psychological, educational and communication characteristics of students

Characteristics	Category	No.	%
<i>Medium of Instruction</i>	Up to 10th in Malayalam	19	38
	Up to 10th in English	24	48
	Primary and Middle in Malayalam, High School in English	0	0
<i>OGPA</i>	Primary in Malayalam, Middle and High School in English	7	14
	Low: <8.08	7	14
	Medium: b/w 8.08 – 8.36	13	26
<i>Aspiration Level</i>	High: >8.36	25	50
	Low: < 7.59	12	24
	Medium: b/w 7.59 – 9.15	33	66
<i>Self confidence</i>	High: >9.15	10	20
	Low: <7.62	20	40
	Medium: b/w 7.62 – 9.42	11	22
<i>Achievement motivation</i>	High: >9.42	19	38
	Low: <23.27	20	40
	Medium: b/w 23.27 – 25.81	21	42
<i>Mass media use</i>	High: >25.81	13	26
	Low: < 11.29	16	32
	Medium: b/w 8.43 – 11.29	20	40
	High: > 8.43	14	28
		16	32

Relationship between profile of students and their perception: Table 4 shows that rural-urban background, educational level of parents, annual income of the family, medium of instruction, self-confidence, achievement motivation, leadership qualities and mass media use were the variables that had a significant relationship with perception. Among these variables rural-urban background, medium of instruction, achievement motivation, leadership qualities and mass media use had positive significance while educational level of parents, annual income of family and self-confidence had negatively significant relationship with perception. Regression analysis also revealed that rural urban background, aspiration level, OGPA and leadership quality had influenced perception of students significantly. All the independent variables together contributed 78 per cent of the variability in perception regarding RAWE objectives.

Rural-urban background had a positive significance with perception of students. Since the whole Kerala is a rural urban continuum, no place can be termed truly rural or truly urban. This makes it clear that every student has a taste of both rural and urban characters. Since students consider RAWE as an experience to see and understand a truly rural setup, they were having a positive perception regarding RAWE objectives.

Medium of instruction had a positive significant relation with perception. Since those who studied in Malayalam language in school could interact better with farmers in RAWE, they had a positive perception regarding RAWE objectives.

Table 4. Relationship between perception and profile and its contribution in explaining the variability in perception

Independent variables	r' value	'b' value
Sex	0.1873 NS	0.948 NS
Rural-urban background	0.4357 **	10.230 **
Education level of parents	-0.4806 **	0.687 NS
Occupation of parents	-0.1588 NS	-0.555 NS
Annual income of family	-0.4603 **	-0.183 NS
Medium of instruction	0.3488 **	-0.503 NS
Aspiration level	-0.2096 NS	-1.857 **
OGPA	-0.1603 NS	-5.433 NS
Self confidence	-0.2910 *	-0.730 NS
Achievement motivation	0.2946 *	0.065 NS
Leadership qualities	0.3931 **	0.508 **
Mass media usage	0.3049 *	-0.058 NS

$R^2 = 0.7897$

NS – Non-Significant

** - Significant at 1 % level

* - Significant at 5 % level

Achievement motivation shows a positive significant relation with perception about RAWE objectives. This may be due to the fact that students think that their future achievements are based on the B.Sc. (Agri.) degree which they acquired now. Since RAWE is an integral part of B.Sc. (Agri.) curriculum the performance in it affects their overall B.Sc. (Agri.) performance also. So students with high achievement motivation concentrated well on RAWE and had a positive perception regarding RAWE objectives.

Leadership qualities also showed a positive significant relation with perception of students. This is due to the fact that those students, who showed more leadership qualities, naturally lead their group in all activities in RAWE. This created a positive perception in them towards RAWE and its objectives.

Also mass media use was another variable, which showed positive significance. This may be due to the fact that an increase in mass media use makes students more exposed to the present situation in agriculture and this made them more active in RAWE, which can help them in checking the ground realities on their own.

Interestingly the educational level of parents and annual income of family had negatively significant relationship with perception. It can be inferred that those students whose parents had high level of education were in jobs other than agriculture. Normally the students coming from such families take up agriculture course as a last choice and their perception is entirely different from those from farming families. As the parents have higher positions and higher education their wards tend to think in that direction rather than for a positive perception towards agriculture and RAWE also. They perceive RAWE as a part of course work only and don't perceive favorably whether objectives are achieved or not. As the annual income of a family is high, the students from such families will be having higher aspirations and interests than agriculture. Agriculture being not much remunerative enterprise these days, students tend to show a negative perception towards it and RAWE objectives as such since they are more interested in other vocations.

Self-confidence showed a negative relationship with perception. This may be due to the reason that, as noted, students who are more self-confident starts preparing for competitive exams for admission to management courses particularly MBA with specialization in agriculture and rural development. This new trend has lead to low interest in academics in final

year since they are going to divert to a new field. Since these exams demand a high level of preparation, the students are concentrating more on it than on RAWE leading to a negative perception towards RAWE objectives.

Suggestions for improvement of RAWE by KAU students : Nearly three-fourth (74%) of the students suggested that time for each module in RAWE is to be increased followed by suggestion for stipend (72%). Nearly half of the students (48%) wanted KAU to increase its credibility and accessibility among farmers while 46 per cent wanted keeping away from politics at least in RAWE. Nearly two-fifth of them wanted entrusting of teachers with genuine interest (42%), give opportunities to all students equally and time convenience of farmers to be taken care (38%). More than one-fourth of them wanted to choose areas where majority of people are engaged in agriculture (36%) and proper planning by teachers before each module (34%). More than one – fourth of them wanted a mini RAWE before original (28%) and adequate publicity for each programme (26%). Nearly one-fifth of them wanted to be placed in ideal institutions only (22%) and wanted teachers to act as role models always (18%). While 16 per cent wanted to take up individual projects in their areas of interest, 14 per cent wanted more orientation in areas of post harvest and marketing aspects. Other suggestions included encouragement of practical problem solving in field (12%), proper back up using junior batches (10%), more collaboration with NGOs and line departments (8%) and more exposure on TOT programmes (6%).

SWOT analysis of RAWE programme at KAU:

Strengths of RAWE : Students considered almost all the items as highly important strengths of RAWE as seen in grid 1. The biggest strengths were increase in knowledge and skill, better rapport with farmers, Agro clinics at different locations, building teamwork and exposure to NGOs (96%). Participation of farmers (94%), field exposure to students, updating practical knowledge, building self-confidence and competence, exposure on watershed and farm planning (92%) were the other highly rated strengths. While almost all the items were highly rated, exposure on adoption patterns of different technologies was the least important strength.

Weaknesses of RAWE : As seen in grid 2, students rated lack of time for implementation as the highest weakness of RAWE (72%). This was followed by lack

Table 5. Suggestions for improvement of RAWE by students

Constraints	No.	%	Rank
Time for each module in RAWE to be increased	37	74	I
Stipend should be increased	36	72	II
Should be for one entire cropping season rather than for one semester	31	62	III
University should increase its credibility and accessibility among farmers. This will change farmers attitude towards KAU and its students	24	48	IV
Students should keep away from politics and groupism at least in RAWE	23	46	V
Entrust only teachers with genuine interest in RAWE	21	42	VI
Give opportunities to all students equally in RAWE	19	38	VII
Convenience and time availability of farmers to be taken care of	19	38	VIII
Choose areas where majority of people are engaged in agriculture	18	36	IX
Proper planning by teachers required before each module	17	34	X
A mini RAWE of 1 –2 weeks to be done before actual RAWE to understand farmers' problems and plan for the original RAWE	14	28	XI
Adequate publicity to be given prior to each programme	13	26	XII
Students to be placed in ideally functioning institutions only	11	22	XIII
Teachers should always act as role models	9	18	XIV
Students should be allowed to take up individual projects in their areas of interest in RAWE	8	16	XV
More orientation to be given to students in areas of post harvest operations and marketing aspects	7	14	XVI
Activities on practical problem solving in field to be encouraged	6	12	XVII
Proper back up to be provided to RAWE using junior batches	5	10	XVIII
More collaboration with NGOs and line departments	4	8	XIX
More exposure to transfer of technology programmes is required	3	6	XX

Strengths	Weaknesses
Increase in knowledge and skill	Lack of time for implementation
Better rapport with farmers	Lack of proper planning
Agro clinics at different locations	Lack of financial support
Building teamwork	Problems in identification of suitable enterprises
Exposure on NGOs	Speedy implementation
Opportunities	Threats
For improvement in communication and leadership skills	High amount of resources and energy needed
For more exposure on watershed management	Lack of cooperation from contact farmers / local leaders/ officials of local institutions
For more exposure on NGOs	Concentration on one village leads to limited exposure
For rapport building with professionals	Limited training on research and administration
To gain technical know-how in PRA activities	Students groups / politics may hamper proper conduct of the programme

SWOT Matrix of RAWE Programme of KAU based on Students' rating (This SWOT matrix is based on the top five items rated under each category.)

of proper planning (62%), lack of financial support (58%), problems in identification of suitable enterprises (52%) and speedy implementation (50%). It was noted that lack of initiatives was rated as the least among weaknesses of RAWE (46%).

Opportunities of RAWE: It can be seen from grid 3 that students considered almost all the items as opportunities of RAWE. The biggest opportunity was improvement in communication and leadership skills

(92%) followed by exposure on watershed management (88%) and exposure on NGOs (82%). More than half of the students agreed upon almost all the items as opportunities.

Threats of RAWE : Grid 4 shows that high amount of resources and energy needed was considered as the biggest threat of RAWE (66%). This was followed by lack of cooperation from contact farmers / local leaders etc (64%) and concentration on one village leads to

limited exposure (62%). 'On-campus teaching suffers' was rated as the least threat of RAWE by 64 per cent of the students followed by adverse weather conditions (52%) as another least important threat.

It can be noted that the strength of RAWE lies in building teamwork, giving rich diagnostic experience to students through Agro clinics at different locations, increase in knowledge, increase in skill and exposure on NGOs. Students considered exposure on adoption pattern of different technologies as the least strength. This is due to the fact that they had lesser exposure on this aspect. This has to be improved in the coming years. Students considered lack of time for implementation as the biggest weakness, which has to be improved in the future for better efficiency of RAWE. It was seen that there is still more opportunity in RAWE to improve communication and leadership skills. Finally, the lack of cooperation from contact farmers / local leaders / officials of local institutions was rated as the biggest threat in the conduct of RAWE. This is due to the fact that students faced difficulties in finding cooperation from contact farmers / local leaders / officials in many cases. This affected their performance in RAWE and the programme itself. The university has to take this matter very seriously and make corrective measures to help the future batches of students. SWOT analysis is best used as a guide and not as a prescription. Hence, the university can improve upon the programme based on the present analysis and make it a more effective one.

CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that the RAWE was highly successful in improving the communication and

leadership skills of students along with providing opportunity to work in agri-based industries. At the same time it was weak in providing practical experience in crop production at field and acquaintance with on-going TOT programmes. Since the findings gave an excellent feedback on the weaker areas, which are equally important to mould competence and confidence building of students, matching the programme with cropping season and proper orientation on diagnostic skills through case studies would go a long way in improving the students' abilities.

Rural-urban background, medium of instruction, achievement motivation, leadership qualities and mass media usage had a positive significance while educational level of parents, annual income of family and self-confidence had negatively significant relationship with perception. Since more number of students is coming from urban background and also the medium of instruction is English up to seventh semester in B.Sc (Agri) degree programme, it is very much essential to give orientation in local language during RAWE so that it becomes easy for the students to converse with the farmers.

Even though the suggestions like increasing time duration of each module and matching RAWE with cropping season has to be discussed in detail, others like increasing the stipend and providing it in time and keeping away student politics at least in RAWE has to be immediately noted so as to improve the participation of students in the programme and ultimately to make it more useful.

Paper received on : September 10, 2012

Accepted on : December 17, 2012

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