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Perception of Indian agricultural professionals towards creating a new department of agricultural education in agricultural universities of India

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Abstract

Agricultural Education is a hinge in the cycle of agri-science integration. The purpose of this descriptive study was to investigate the perception of Agricultural professionals working under various central and state agricultural universities of India, towards the creation of a new agricultural education department. Total 400 teachers and 200 researchers from various CAUs and SAUs were contacted through e-mail survey method for this research. Among the received responses 120 responses were taken into consideration through the purposive sampling method. Perception of the agri-professionals were studied under four sub-components i.e perception towards creating a department on Agricultural Education, perception towards the scope of Agricultural Education, perception regarding employment opportunity in the Department of Agricultural Education, perception regarding the course content for Agricultural Education with the help of total 21 relevant statements. Overall perception was calculated by considering the above mentioned all subcomponents. According to the findings of the study majority of agricultural professionals of India had medium perception towards agricultural education, which shows that teachers and researchers had a positive perception towards creating a new department of agricultural education. This entire new division will prepare students for employment in various agriculture and allied sectors.

Keywords: Agricultural education, perception, agricultural educators, agricultural professionals, new discipline

Introduction

Agricultural Education is a complex discipline that focuses on the integration of agricultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes within an established curriculum, where the cultivation, maintenance, sustainability and appreciation of plants, animals and the environment are stressed. Many countries refer to agricultural education as similar to extension practices or promoting field programs directed at small farmers'. Agricultural education is closely linked with both 'education' and 'agriculture' whether working with widespread policy or instruction at the classroom level.

Agriculture does not fall easily in any group of educational subjects in most formal education systems. It is being seen variously as "practical", as an applied science, or as a valuable cross-curricular linkage with no real place in any grouping. Many people view agricultural education or agriculture as dirty practical work, hence, the reluctance of its adaptation into many schools and colleges curriculum.

Agricultural Education is an expensive venture, especially when compared to other programs within a University setting. The resources required in order for it to be credible are expensive and funds are not easy to acquire. Many agricultural activities and operations are not commercialized because they are utilized as a teaching tool. Therefore; income generated from farm operations, for example, is minimal despite the vast expanses of farmland. However, one way of overcoming this phenomenon is through the establishment of farming enterprises. Utilizing this method, commercial ventures can take place with students rotating through the different established enterprises, observing and participating in various field practices.

Agricultural education can be taught at the elementary level, middle school level, secondary, and adult levels. In some countries, Elementary agriculture is taught in public schools and private schools and deals with such subjects as how plants and animals grow and how soil is farmed and conserved. Subjects that taught in higher agricultural education curriculum include Horticulture, land management, turf grass management, agricultural science, small animal care, machine and shop classes, health and nutrition, livestock management, biology courses, etc.

The present situation in India demands a renewed thrust for enhanced quality and relevance of higher agricultural education to facilitate and undertake human capacity building for developing self-motivated professionals and entrepreneurs in view the changing scenario of the globalization of education, the emergence of new areas of specialization such as IPRs, other WTO-related areas, techno-legal specialties etc. So, it is assumed that the perception towards agricultural education will give a proper kind of thought process to bring out the good quality of education system in various agricultural domains. Hence, the present study was conducted with the below- mentioned objective;

To study the perception of India agricultural professionals towards creating a new department of agricultural education in agricultural universities of India.

Research methodology

The study was conducted at Institute of Agricultural Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. The respondents consisted of university teachers and researchers from 64 State Agricultural Universities (SAUs), 4 Deemed to be Universities (DUs), 3 Central Agricultural Universities (CAUs) and 4 Central Universities (CUs) with Agriculture Faculty in India under ICAR in the year 2018. In this study, descriptive research design was followed whereas the purposive sampling technique and e-mail survey method was applied to collect the data. Table 1 depicted the selection of

respondents. There were total 400 teachers and 200 researchers to whom the questionnaire were sent in the form of email or google document. Among the received responses, 20 per cent were selected purposively. Out of which 80 responses from the teachers and 40 responses from the researchers were taken into consideration.

Perception about agricultural education was operationalized how the agricultural teachers of university and the researchers of the agricultural system see, hear, and feel about creating a department of agricultural education in agricultural universities of India. The perception towards "creating a new department of agricultural education" was studied under 4 components i.e. perception towards creating a department on Agricultural Education, perception towards the scope of Agricultural Education, perception regarding employment opportunity in the Department of Agricultural Education, perception regarding the course content for Agricultural Education. Under each component, various relevant statements were prepared and the respondents were allowed to answer in three-degree continuum against each statement i.e. Agree, Disagree and Undecided and scores such as 3 for agree, 2 for disagree and 1 for undecided were assigned. The collected data were tabulated and further, frequency and percentage were calculated for suitable inference. The overall perception was calculated by computing mean and standard deviation, considering all the statements under these four components.

Table 1: Representing the sample size of the study with purposive sampling

Respondents	Population of the study	Sample Size (20 percent of the population)
Teachers	400	80
Researchers	200	40
Total	600	120

Results and discussion

After analyzing the responses the results were interpreted and discussed in following sub-heads:

1. Perception of respondents towards creating a new department of Agricultural Education

The table 2 shows that majority of the respondents that is about 96.67 per cent were agreed that there is an increasing importance of agricultural education all over the globe. So it can be concluded that the respondents had a high perception regarding the importance of agriculture education. About 93.33 per cent of the respondents also believed that learning agricultural education contributes to economic development of the nation There are many scientists and research centers in our country that develops many new tools and technology to increase the productivity of agriculture and allied sectors. In this study, agricultural university teachers were taken as respondents and they had high perception regarding the agricultural education contribution to the economic development of the country. Majority of the respondents that is around 91.67 per cent agreed with the statement that agricultural education takes a positive part in rural development. Agricultural education facilitates the students an active interaction with rural people and their work. Hence they know the actual condition of the population in the rural areas, which motivates them to take a positive part in rural

development. About 90 per cent respondents agreed with the statement that agricultural education develops a positive attitude towards farming and agriculture in our country. Earlier agriculture meant a lot of manual hard work. But due to the invention of new tools and technologies, it is becoming easier and highly productive, which further attract many people for agriculture-based enterprises. Majority of the respondents (70.83 %) agreed with the statement that 'Agricultural Education makes urban students aware of agriculture in the USA and this may also be applicable in Indian context'. Agriculture is the primary occupation of rural people and is generally performed in a rural scenario, therefore, urban people are not much aware of agricultural practices. Agricultural Education thus helps the students to become aware of agriculture in particular. Again 75.00 per cent respondents agreed with the statement that 'In agricultural universities of USA the Department of Agricultural Education trains the students about the teaching job in agricultural sciences and this may also be applicable in the Indian context. Furthermore, about 82.50 per cent of the respondents agreed with the statement that 'In agricultural universities of USA the Department of Agricultural Education orients the students towards the discipline of agricultural sciences and its importance; this may also be applicable in Indian context'.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their perception towards Creating a Department of Agricultural Education

Sl. No	Particulars	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1	There is an increasing importance of "Agricultural Education" all over the globe.	116	96.67	2	1.67	2	1.67
2	Learning "Agricultural Education" contributes to socio-economic development of the country.	112	93.33	4	3.33	4	3.33
3	"Agricultural Education" takes a positive part in rural development	110	91.67	6	5.00	4	3.33
4	"Agricultural Education" develops positive attitude towards farming & agriculture in our country.	108	90.00	8	6.67	4	3.33
5	In USA the "Agricultural Education Department" in Universities makes the urban Students aware of Agriculture. This is also applicable in the Indian context.	85	70.83	13	10.83	22	18.33
6.	The "Department of Agricultural Education" in USA trains the students about teaching Job in agricultural sciences. This is also applicable in the Indian context.	90	75.00	8	6.67	22	18.33
7.	The "Department of Agricultural Education" in USA orients the students towards the discipline of agricultural sciences and its importance. This is also applicable in the Indian context.	99	82.50	8	6.67	13	10.83

f=Frequency

2. Perception of respondents towards the scope of agricultural education

Table 3 depicts that majority of the respondents (80.83 %) agreed with the statement that 'In agricultural universities of USA, agricultural education is a professional degree and this may also be applicable in Indian context'. About 80.83 per cent respondents agreed with the statement that 'In agricultural universities of USA, Agricultural Education course provides students with a broad understanding of agricultural food and natural resource sciences and this may also be applicable in Indian context'. A higher proportion of the respondents (87.50 %) agreed with the statement that 'In

agricultural universities of USA, the Department of Agricultural Education equips students with experience in teaching and learning process in agriculture and allied sciences and this may also be applicable in Indian context'. It was also observed that about 83.33 per cent of the respondents agreed with the statement that 'Agricultural Education helps students to develop professional educator skills'. Near about two third of the respondents (65.00%) agreed with the statement that 'In agricultural universities of USA, the graduate students from the Department of Agricultural Education are in demand by the employers and this may also be applicable in Indian context'.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to their perception towards the scope of agricultural education

S. No	Particulars	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
8.	"Agricultural Education" is a professional degree in Agricultural Universities of USA. This is also applicable in the Indian context.	98	81.66	8	6.67	14	11.67
9.	"Agricultural Education" course in universities of USA provides students with a broad Understanding of agricultural food and natural resource sciences. This is also applicable in the Indian context.	97	80.83	9	7.50	14	11.67
10.	The "Department of Agricultural Education" in universities of USA equips students with experience in teaching and learning process in agriculture and allied sciences. This is also applicable in the Indian context.	105	87.50	4	3.33	11	9.17
11.	"Agricultural Education" helps students to develop professional educator skills.	100	83.33	8	6.67	12	10.00
12.	The graduate students from "Department of Agricultural Education" in Agricultural universities of USA are in demand by the employers. This is also applicable in the Indian context.	78	65.00	18	15.00	24	20.00

f=Frequency

3. Perception of the respondents regarding employment opportunity in the department of Agricultural education

From Table 4 it is evident that more than two third of the respondents (68.33 %) agreed with the statement that 'In agricultural universities of USA, there is numerous lucrative Career opportunity for the students having a degree in agricultural education and this may also be applicable in Indian context'. It infers that there are diverse employment opportunities for agricultural graduates in private, government and business sector. Respondents believed that it would benefit the students in life, and prepare them for an agricultural career. Majority of the respondents (66.67 %) agreed with the statement that 'In agricultural universities of USA, agricultural education graduates from the department of Agricultural Education take the position as agricultural educators and this may also be applicable in Indian context'. Near about half of the respondents (49.17 %) disagreed with the statement that 'generally agricultural education career is perceived as a boring profession in India'. Here we can see

That agricultural education is not perceived as a boring profession by the majority of the respondents. Majority of the respondents that is about 79.17 per cent agreed with the statement that 'In agricultural universities of USA, the department of agricultural education helps to develop leadership skills in agriculture and this may also be applicable in Indian context'. Agricultural education leads to leadership development activities that help to develop the whole personality of an individual and promote interpersonal relations and communication skills, problem-solving and teamwork abilities. Regular interaction from time to time with people may be the reason for this which strengthens the communication and leadership skills. It was also noticed that majority of the respondents that is about 65.00 per cent agreed with the statement that 'generally graduates from the department of agricultural education are perceived to be hard working with poor pay in India'. So, in this context proper remuneration to be granted to the agriculture graduates in various jobs.

Table 4. Distribution of respondents according to their perception regarding employment opportunity in the department of Agricultural education:

S. No	Particulars	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
13.	In USA there is numerous lucrative Career opportunities for the students having degree in "Agricultural education". This is also applicable in the Indian context.	82	68.33	22	18.33	16	13.33
14.	"Agricultural Education" graduates from Department of Agricultural Education in USA take position as agricultural educators. This is also applicable in the Indian context.	80	66.67	14	11.67	26	21.67
15.	Generally "Agricultural Education" career is perceived as boring profession in India.	52	43.33	9	7.50	59	49.17
16.	In USA the "Department of Agricultural Education" helps to develop leadership skills in agriculture. This is also applicable in the Indian context.	95	79.17	8	6.67	17	14.17
17.	Generally graduates of "Department of Agricultural Education" are perceived to be hard working with poor pay in India.	78	65.00	9	7.50	33	27.50

f=Frequency

4. Perception of the respondents regarding course content for Agricultural Education:

Table 5 presents that half of the respondents (50.00%) agreed with the statement that 'In agricultural universities of USA, Liberal education course dealing with Arts and Humanities are offered in the department of agricultural education and this may also be applicable in Indian context'. Around 51.67 per cent of the respondents agreed with the statement that 'In agricultural universities of USA, Liberal education course dealing with Historical perspective is offered in the departments of agricultural education'. Majority of the respondents that is about 59.17 per cent agreed with the statement that 'In agricultural universities of USA, a course

on education dealing with School & Society are offered in the departments of agricultural education and this may also be applicable in Indian context'. Lastly, about 77.50 per cent of the respondents agreed with the statement that 'In agricultural universities of USA, Teaching Internship course dealing with School & Classroom are offered in the department of agricultural education and this may also be applicable in Indian context'. Agricultural education can be a broad spectrum of sub-disciplines like biology, elementary agricultural, horticulture, land management, livestock management, health and nutrition, food science, agricultural marketing, agricultural communication, rural leadership, extension education etc.

Table 5. Distribution of respondents according to their perception regarding course content for Agricultural Education

S. No	Particulars	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
18.	Liberal education course dealing with Arts and Humanities are offered in the "Department of Agricultural Education" at Agricultural universities of USA. This is also applicable in the Indian context.	60	50.00	18	15.00	42	35.00
19.	Liberal education course dealing with Historical perspective are offered in the "Department of Agricultural Education" at Agricultural universities of USA. This is also applicable in the Indian context.	62	51.67	21	17.50	37	30.83
20.	A course on Education dealing with School & Society are offered in the "Department of Agricultural Education" at Agricultural universities of USA. This is also applicable in the Indian context.	71	59.17	20	16.67	29	24.17
21.	Teaching Internship course dealing with School & Classroom are offered in the "Department of Agricultural Education" at Agricultural universities of USA. This is also applicable in the Indian context.	93	77.50	12	10.00	15	12.50

f=Frequency

The overall perception of the respondents towards creating a new department of agricultural education.

After considering the responses for all the statements of four sub-components, perception is categorized into three groups. The first group having a low perception with the score of 47.73, the second group having a medium perception with the score in the range of 60.02 to 47.73 and the last group having a high perception with the score of more than 60.02. Table 6, elucidated that majority of agricultural professionals of India (76.70%) had medium perception towards agricultural education, which shows that most of the teachers and researchers had a positive perception towards creating a new department of agricultural education and they felt the need of creating a separate division of agricultural education in the Agricultural universities which will strengthen the It was also observed that 12.50 per cent of the respondents had low perception and 10.80 per cent of the respondents had high perception regarding creation of agricultural education department.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents according to their overall perception towards Creating a new Department of Agricultural Education

Category	Frequency	Percent
Low (<47.731)	15	12.50
Medium (47.731 to 60.018)	92	76.70
High (>60.018)	13	10.80
Total	120	100.0

Conclusion

India being an agriculture dominating country, in the present era requires some crucial implementations in the agricultural Education sector for the sustainable development of the country. In this context, there is a need to form a curriculum which will integrate the concepts of various agriculture and allied subjects. If classroom learning, experiential learning, leadership development in the agricultural domain are incorporated by agricultural education, it will help the students to become more career oriented and will open up ample employment opportunities. The students will be more competent as far as the agricultural knowledge is concerned

and also will have appropriate experience and training in the classroom teaching. In India, the concept of creating separate agricultural education department is still at the budding stage. Formation of such a department in the agricultural universities of India will surely produce graduates who will be competent enough to serve this country as agricultural educators and also with many other related titles which will help to cater the needs of the future agricultural and educational demands of the country. The findings of the study strongly indicated that majority (76.70%) of the agricultural professionals of central and state agricultural universities of India possessed a medium level of perception towards the creation of a new agricultural education department. This will lead Indian agricultural education system to undergo the dynamic change which we can find in the agricultural education system of many foreign countries.

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