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Opinion of Students towards Quality Assurance in Higher Agricultural Education

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A B S T R A C T

The quality education is not only challenging but also of paramount importance in today's globalised world. In the continued process of quality assurance in higher Agricultural Education, the ICAR established an Accreditation Board during 1996 with well-defined objectives and functions. Report of the IVth Deans Committee has also highlighted measures to improve the quality of Agricultural Education. ICAR has given emphasis on quality assurance in higher agricultural education. The study was conducted in Govind Ballabh Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar. Out of seven colleges, College of Agriculture was selected. Students were selected as a respondent. The descriptive research design was used. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the respondents were satisfied with the different quality assurance measures.

Introduction

Higher education is the backbone of any society. It is the quality of higher education that decides the quality of human resources in a country. By 2025, the projected global demand for higher education could reach 263 million students, which is an increase from a little less than 100 million students in 2000 (Karaim, 2011, p. 551). This could represent an increase of 163 million students in 25 years (Karaim, 2011). As the demand for quality education increases, there is a growing demand for quality assurance (QA) for international universities where there is increased mobility of students, faculty, programs, and higher education institutions in global networks (Hou, 2012; Varonism, 2014). Quality assurance in higher education is defined as the totality of the system, resources and information devoted for maintaining and improving the quality and standards of teaching, learning and research. India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world. State government plays the main role in the higher education system in the country. The University Grants Commission (UGC) serves as a link between the union and state governments and institutions of higher learning. There are several regulatory bodies like Ministry of Human Resource Development, ICAR, and

UGC etc. which regularly monitor the quality of education. The University Grants Commission (UGC) with its statutory powers is expected to maintain quality in Indian Higher education institutions. India achieved remarkable growth in food grains production, which is unprecedented and admired world over. The cradle of this success has been the establishment of institutions of higher agricultural education which developed skilled human resource.

Department of Agriculture Research and Education and Indian Council of Agricultural Research have the mandate of regulating higher agricultural education in the country. In addition, ICAR has put in motion a number of initiatives and reforms to assure the quality in agricultural education which include establishment of Educational Panel (1952), Standing committee on agricultural education (1965), Norms and Accreditation committee (1974), Accreditation Board for Quality Assurance (1996), faculty competence improvement through training, library strengthening, institution of scholarships and fellowships, measures for reducing inbreeding, infrastructure support for library, hostels and procurement of state of the art equipment etc. to have quality assurance in agricultural education.

Report of the IVth Deans Committee to reorient Agricultural Education need to be given attention. There are several factors affecting quality of education and need urgent attention. Quality assurance in higher agricultural education has been given emphasis by the higher bodies like ICAR.

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) provide guidelines to ensure quality of education except the routine rituals of monitoring implementation of education. There are very few studies conducted in India as it is very important aspect to be considered. Thus, the quality assurance in agricultural education expressed by students need to be probed.

The main objectives include to study the socio-personal profile of respondents. And also to analyze quality assurance in agriculture education based on the opinion of students

Materials and Methods

G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar was selected purposively as a locale of the study as it's a first State Agricultural University of India in Udham Singh Nagar district of Uttarakhand state. Established on the recommendation of University Education Commission (1948) headed by Dr. Radhakrishnan, this university was the first rural university. The university has seven constituent colleges viz. Agriculture College, Home Science College, Veterinary College, College of Basic Science and Humanities, College of Technology, College of Agri-Business Management and College of Fisheries. Then out of seven Colleges, College of Agriculture was selected purposively for the study. College of Agriculture established in 1960 is one of the first colleges of the university. The establishment of this college was an important milestone for the development of the first agricultural university. As students exhibit resultant effect of all the quality measures and policies so were selected as respondents. Descriptive research design was used for conducting this research study.

Results and Discussion

Socio personal profile

Maximum numbers of the students (44.00 per cent) were of 21 years age. 40.00 per cent student respondents were found to be of 22 years. Only 16.00 per cent respondents were of 23 years age. The average age of the respondents was 21.72 while the range was

from 21 to 23. Majority of the respondents (80.00 per cent) were females and only 20.00 per cent were males. Majority of the respondents (80.00 per cent) had English as medium of basic education followed by 20.00 per cent of the respondents who had Hindi as the medium of basic education.

Majority of the respondents belonged to the urban area (68.00 per cent) whereas only 32.00 per cent respondents belonged to the rural areas. Majority of the respondents (66.00 per cent) had medium academic performance followed by 22.00 per cent of those who had high academic performance and 12.00 per cent had low academic performance. Majority of the respondents (86.00 per cent) had educational aspiration, 14.00 per cent respondents who does not had educational aspiration.

Opinion of students towards quality assurance measures

Opinion of student respondents was sought on various parameters of quality assurance with respect to agricultural education. The parameters are lecture halls, smart classroom, computer and internet facility, laboratory facilities, library facilities and curriculum. The results obtained on each of these parameters have been discussed below:

Lecture halls

In this study it refers to the adequacy of the lecture halls, furniture, quality of blackboards/ whiteboards, electricity facility, cleanliness, technology integration, audio-visual and multimedia support in the lecture halls.

A perusal of table 1 reveal that half of the respondents (50.00 per cent) were not satisfied whereas 46.00 per cent of the respondents were satisfied with the adequacy of the lecture halls. A meagre 4.00 per cent respondents reported high satisfaction with regard to this parameter. Data regarding furniture shows that majority of respondents (56.00 per cent) were satisfied with the available furniture followed by 40.00 per cent of the respondents who were not satisfied. Only 4.00 per cent respondents were highly satisfied. Majority of the respondents (58.00 per cent) were satisfied with the quality of blackboard or whiteboard followed by 38.00 per cent respondents who were not satisfied. Only 4.00 per cent respondents were highly satisfied. Some of the respondents found it good whereas some favored replacement of the furniture. They were also of the view that maintenance work should be carried out on a regular basis. Data regarding electricity facilities shows that majority of the respondents (78.00 per cent) were satisfied with the electricity facilities in the lecture halls followed by 12.00 per cent respondents were not satisfied. Only 10.00 per cent respondents were highly satisfied. Data regarding cleanliness shows that majority of the respondents (50.00 per cent) were satisfied with the cleanliness in the lecture halls followed by 40.00 per cent respondents were not satisfied. Only 10.00 per cent respondents were highly satisfied.

Majority of the respondents (60.00 per cent) were not satisfied with the technology integration in the lecture halls followed by 34.00 per cent respondents who were satisfied. Only 6.00 per cent respondents were highly satisfied. Majority of the respondents were not satisfied with the technology integration in the classrooms. This might be due to the reason that there is no technology integration in the undergraduate lecture halls and only one or two smart classrooms are there. Data regarding audio-visual and multimedia support shows that majority of the respondents (50.00 per cent) were satisfied with the audio-visual and multimedia support in the lecture halls followed by 44.00 per cent respondents who were not satisfied. Only 6.00 per cent respondents were highly satisfied.

Respondents were just satisfied and even 40.00 per cent were not satisfied because audio-visual support is not available in each classroom.

Smart classroom

It refers to the accessibility to the smart classroom and quality of smart classroom

A cursory look at table 2 reveals that majority of the respondents (56.00 per cent) were not satisfied with the accessibility of smart classrooms followed by 44.00 per cent respondents who were satisfied. No one was highly satisfied with this facility.

Majority were not satisfied because smart classrooms were created for use by teachers to improve quality of teaching but the smart classroom facility is not being utilized. Some students reported that they have not received instruction in smart classrooms. Data regarding quality of smart classroom reveal that majority of the respondents (54.00 per cent) were satisfied with the quality of smart classrooms followed by 32.00 per cent respondents who were not satisfied. Only 14.00 per cent respondents were highly satisfied. More number of the respondents was satisfied because quality of classroom is very good only problem is of its utilization.

Computer and internet facility

It refers to the Central Computing Facility (CCF) and accessibility to it.

Data regarding Central Computing Facility (CCF) show that majority of the respondents (62.00 per cent) were satisfied with the Central Computing Facility followed by 20.00 per cent respondents who were highly satisfied. 18.00 per cent of the respondents were not satisfied with this facility. Majority were satisfied because some found it as the excellent facility of the university, technically managed and maintained properly as compared to other components of the university.

A perusal of table 3 regarding accessibility to computer and internet facility shows that majority of the respondents (70.00 per cent) were satisfied with the accessibility to computer and internet facility followed by 18.00 per cent respondents who were highly satisfied. Only 12.00 per cent respondents were not satisfied. This might be due to the reason that there is good accessibility to the computer and internet facility as central computing facilities are good and well maintained. Internet facility is also available in most of the hostels.

Laboratory facilities

It refers to the infrastructure for laboratories, equipment availability, and equipment maintenance and field practical facility. Field practical facility implies the facilities for field training during the entire degree programme.

A cursory look at table 4 shows that majority of the respondents (54.00 per cent) were satisfied with the infrastructure available in laboratories followed by 40.00 per cent respondents, who were not satisfied. Only 6.00 per cent respondents were highly satisfied.

Data regarding equipment availability in the laboratories show that majority of the respondents (66.00 per cent) were satisfied with equipment availability in the laboratories followed by 28.00 per cent respondents, who were not satisfied. Only 6.00 per cent respondents were highly satisfied.

Majority of the respondents (44.00 per cent) were not satisfied with equipment maintenance in the laboratories followed by 42.00 per cent respondents who were satisfied. Only 7.00 per cent respondents were highly satisfied. As regards field practical

facility, the table shows that majority of the respondents (52.00 per cent) were satisfied with field practical facility followed by 24.00 per cent respondents, who were highly satisfied and 24.00 per cent respondents were not satisfied.

Table.1 Socio-personal profile of the respondents

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age (Range)	21 years	22	44
	22 years	20	40
	23 years	8	16
Gender	Male	10	20
	Female	40	80
Medium of basic education	Hindi	10	20
	English	40	80
	Any other	-	-
Family background	Rural	16	32
	Urban	34	78
Academic performance	Low (less than 7.19)	6	12
	Medium(7.19-7.89)	33	66
	High(more than 7.89)	11	22
Educational aspiration	Yes	43	86
	No	7	14

Table.2 Distribution of students' opinion on 'Lecture halls' (n=50)

Sl. No.	Category	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Not satisfied
1.	Adequacy of the lecture halls	2 (4%)	23 (46%)	25 (50%)
2.	Furniture	2 (4%)	28 (56%)	20 (40%)
3.	Quality of blackboard or whiteboard	2 (4%)	29 (58%)	19 (38%)
4.	Electricity facility	5 (10%)	39 (78%)	6 (12%)
5.	Cleanliness	5 (10%)	25 (50%)	20 (40%)
6.	Technology integration	3 (6%)	17 (34%)	30 (60%)
7.	Audio- visual and Multimedia support	3 (6%)	25 (50%)	22 (44%)

Table.3 Distribution of students' opinion on 'Smart classrooms' (n=50)

Sl. No.	Category	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Not satisfied
1.	Accessibility	-	22 (44%)	28 (56%)
2.	Quality	7 (14%)	27 (54%)	16 (32%)

Table.4 Distribution of students' opinion on 'Computer and internet facility' (n=50)

Sl. No.	Category	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Not satisfied
1.	Central Computing Facility (CCF)	10 (20%)	31 (62%)	9 (18%)
2.	Accessibility	9 (18%)	35 (70%)	6 (12%)

Table.5 Distribution of students' opinion on 'Laboratory facilities' (n=50)

Sl. No.	Category	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Not satisfied
1.	Infrastructure	3 (6%)	27 (54%)	20 (40%)
2.	Equipment availability	3 (6%)	33 (66%)	14 (28%)
3.	Equipment maintenance	7 (14%)	21 (42%)	22 (44%)
4.	Field practical facility	12 (24%)	26 (52%)	12 (24%)

Table.6 Distribution of students' opinion on 'Library facilities' (n=50)

Sl. No.	Category	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Not satisfied
1.	Availability of books	8 (16%)	23 (46%)	19 (38%)
2.	Availability of journals	7 (14%)	36 (72%)	7 (14%)
3.	Issuing process	4 (8%)	42 (84%)	4 (8%)
4.	Upgradation of books, journals, magazine etc.	2 (4%)	24 (48%)	24 (48%)
5.	Electronic arrangement	6 (12%)	30 (60%)	14 (28%)
6.	Documentation section facility	5 (10%)	39 (78%)	6 (12%)

Table.7 Distribution of students' opinion on 'Sports facility' (n=50)

Sl. No.	Category	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Not satisfied
1.	Infrastructure	7 (14%)	38 (76%)	5 (10%)
2.	Opportunities (regional/ national level etc.)	5 (10%)	35 (70%)	10 (20%)
3.	Sports items availability	1 (2%)	40 (80%)	9 (18%)

Table.8 Distribution of students' opinion on 'Curriculum' (n=50)

Sl. No.	Category	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Not satisfied
1.	Syllabus	11 (22%)	31 (62%)	8 (16%)
2.	Examination pattern	11 (22%)	24 (48%)	15 (30%)
3.	Evaluation procedure	9 (18%)	29 (58%)	12 (24%)

Library facilities

Opinion of students was sought on the library facilities available to them for pursuing studies. It refers to the availability of books and journals (e journal and hardcopy), issuing process, upgradation of books, journals, magazines etc., electronic arrangements and documentation section facility.

The table shows that majority of the respondents (46.00 per cent) were satisfied with the availability of books followed by 38.00 per cent respondents, who were not satisfied with recent editions of books. The reason of being not satisfied is that there are very few copies of some books in rental. A perusal of table 5 shows that majority of the respondents (72.00 per cent) were satisfied with the availability of journals followed by 14.00 per cent respondents who were highly satisfied and 14.00 per cent respondents, who were not satisfied. High level of satisfaction was expressed by 72.00 per cent of the respondents is an indication of the excellent library facilities available to students for pursuing studies. Data regarding the issuing process show that majority of the respondents (84.00 per cent) were satisfied with the issuing process followed by 8.00 per cent respondents, who were highly satisfied and 8.00 per cent respondents were not satisfied. High level of satisfaction expressed by the respondents is an indication that the

university library has adequate and convenient issuing process. Data regarding upgradation of books, journals, magazine etc. have been presented in table 5.

Table shows that majority of the respondents (48.00 per cent) were satisfied followed by 48.00 per cent respondents, who were not satisfied and 4.00 per cent respondents were highly satisfied. Respondents were equally satisfied and not satisfied with the upgradation process and this may be due to the reason that there are very old editions of books available in the library. Edition of books, journals are not regularly upgraded. An equal number of respondents that is (48.00 per cent) indicated their satisfaction and 48.00 per cent indicated their dissatisfaction regarding upgradation of books, journals, magazines. Electronic arrangement, computer based catalogue search facility available in the library which brings easiness in the process of searching any book. Table 5 shows that majority of the respondents (60.00 per cent) were satisfied with the electronic arrangement followed by 28.00 per cent respondents, who were not satisfied. Only 12.00 per cent respondents were highly satisfied.

A cursory look at table 5 reveals that majority of the respondents (78.00 per cent) were satisfied with the documentation section facility followed by 12.00 per cent respondents, who were not satisfied. Only 10.00 per cent respondents were highly satisfied.

Sports facility

It refers to the infrastructure, opportunities (regional, national level etc.), and sports items availability. A perusal of the table 5 indicates that majority of the respondents (76.00 per cent) were satisfied with the infrastructure for sports followed by 14.00 per cent respondents who were highly satisfied. Only 10.00 per cent respondents were not satisfied. As regards opportunities at regional/ national level etc. in sports, the table shows that that majority of the respondents (70.00 per cent) were satisfied with the opportunities in sports followed by 20.00 per cent respondents, who were not satisfied. Only 10.00 per cent respondents were highly satisfied.

As depicted in the table, majority of the respondents (80.00 per cent) were satisfied with the sports items availability followed by 18.00 per cent respondents, who were not satisfied. Only 2.00 per cent respondents were highly satisfied. High level of satisfaction might be due to the fact that the university has good sports facilities.

Curriculum

It refers to the syllabus, examination pattern and evaluation procedure. A perusal of table 7 indicates that majority of the respondents (62.00 per cent) were satisfied with the syllabus followed by 22.00 per cent respondents who were highly satisfied. Only 16.00 per cent respondents were not satisfied. Data regarding examination pattern show that majority of the respondents (48.00 per cent) were satisfied with the examination pattern followed by 30.00 per cent respondents who were not satisfied. Only 11.00 per cent respondents were highly satisfied. A cursory look at table 7 reveals that majority of the respondents (58.00 per cent) were satisfied with the evaluation procedure followed by 24.00 per cent respondents who were not satisfied. Only 18.00 per cent respondents were highly satisfied (Table 8).

Placement and counseling services

Data regarding placement and counseling services show that majority of the respondents (76.00 per cent) were not satisfied with the

services provided by the university's Placement and Counseling services. 24.00 per cent of the respondents were satisfied and believed that they get benefitted by the services provided by the Placement and Counseling services.

Majority of the respondents opined that the Placement and Counselling services need to be reoriented and efforts should focus on the companies offering good pay packages and better job conditions. Gender bias by the companies was an important concern expressed by student respondents. They also expressed that all students irrespective of their gender should have equal opportunities for employment in companies. Student respondents expressed that the Placement and Counseling Cell needs to focus on the following dimensions:

Career counseling of students

Career linked Personality Development Workshops

Student-Company interactions

Students' participation in Placement and Counseling activity

Improvements needed in upgrading the classrooms

Students have different opinion regarding improvements needed in upgrading the classrooms. Majority of the students opined that there should be adequate and good quality furniture in the classrooms. Students were concerned that there should be more smart classrooms which should be regularly used.

Classrooms should be equipped with multimedia projection system to facilitate quality teaching. Several students reported that classrooms need to be more neat and clean with proper electricity fixtures, proper maintenance of window pans and availability of white boards /Black Boards.

Facilities extended by various offices of the university

Students are supported through several administrative units like Student Welfare, Registrar and Post Graduate Studies etc. Opinion of students was sought on various facilities extended by these administrative units. Majority of the respondents were not satisfied with the facilities as official work is slow and poorly executed. There were many good facilities in the offices but processing is late and dissemination of information was poor. Some of the students were satisfied with the facilities.

In conclusion, Quality remains the most important attribute that creates value about the product or service for the receiver. Quality assurance is the responsibility of everyone in an educational institution, though the top management sets the policies and priorities. Higher education is the source or feeder system in all walks of life and therefore supplies the much-needed human resource in management, planning, design, teaching and research. Quality assurance in higher agricultural education has been given emphasis by the higher bodies like ICAR. Majority of the students were satisfied regarding most of the quality assurance measures.

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