

Improving the quality of agricultural graduates is a universal concern. Our graduates lack the needed skills and knowledge to perform their duties effectively in their profession. writes Diwan Rashidul Hassan, Director of Public Relations and Publications at the Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh

Bangladesh economy is predominantly agriculture-based. The over-all development of the country depends on increased agricultural production and planned utilisation of the produce. To accomplish these, it is necessary to modernise agriculture, for which again spread of modern knowledge in scientific agriculture is essential.

Agriculture is a composite arts developed by employment of knowledges gathered in the different fields of natural science for efficient production and distribution of articles which can be produced on land and water, indoor and outdoor. Educationists at a national seminar on Agricultural Education and Research in Bangladesh said that organised agriculture came into practice in the geographic region now called Bangladesh about 4000 years ago by the Austric linguistic tribes and later by the Aryan settlers. But the technology of agriculture remained almost static until the British colonialists promulgated Permanent Settlement Act in 1793. Before that, since the inception of organised agriculture, there were autonomous villages in which the people obligatorily followed caste system based on profession. There was no incentive for innovation mainly because, (i) the autonomous villages never felt the need for

improvement in production technology, (ii) the obligatory professional caste system in agricultural profession was never by choice and (iii) the social system was a sterile hybrid of primitive communalism and feudalism.

The Permanent Settlement Act 1793 brought forward some revolutionary changes: (i) private ownership of land, (ii) production of raw materials for British industries, (iii) new revenue system and

“Experts opine that the agricultural technologies so far developed through research in Bangladesh are not, in most cases, best suited and well adapted to local conditions.”

iv) agricultural research, teaching and extension organizations.

The Department of Agriculture was first established under the Department of Land Records in 1880 Independent Department of Agriculture was established in 1906. First agricultural research laboratory and farm

was commissioned in 1908 at Telgaon. In 1929, All India Imperial Council of Agricultural Research was established. First Institute for agricultural education in India was Bengal Agricultural Institute, established at Telgaon in 1938. For its support the University of Dhaka created the faculty of agriculture in 1940 and started offering B. Ag. degree to the general science graduates after 2 years of study at the institute. From 1945 the degree (B. Ag.) course was offered to students for 3 years after 12 classes of schooling (1 Sc) This system was followed till the establishment of Agricultural University at Mymensingh in 1961. The Agricultural University started offering degree courses of

Master's degree course is always of one year duration after the bachelor's degree in agriculture since 1940.

Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) is the coordinating body for agricultural research in the country. It sponsors BARI, BAU, BIRI SRTI BRRI LRI and other organisations engaged in agricultural research. Unfortunately most of the research activities are non-fundamental in nature and hence less creative.

In Bangladesh, research concerning livestock is scattered in several organizations. The livestock research system consists of a complex institutions, centres and faculties of the Agricultural University. These institutes (Animal Husbandry Research

breeding research.

Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute (BIRI) was established at Savar in 1984 to concentrate research efforts on solving problems that restrain the growth and development of livestock in the farming systems of Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Agricultural University through the Faculty of Veterinary Science and the Faculty of Animal Husbandry is using its limited resources to conduct research in the field of animal health and animal production, mostly of an academic and on-station nature. In addition, a number of livestock related studies have been undertaken in the organizations and various projects supported by foreign donors and voluntary bodies such as UNICEF, DANIDA, World University Service (WUS), CARE, PROSIKA, BRAC etc.

Modernising agricultural education

ses and valid reasons for the farmers to reject the technologies. Extension research can play an important role in determining the factors responsible for farmer's response to modern technologies as well as their preference for adhering to old traditions and customs.

Improving the quality of agricultural graduates is a universal concern. Although enough empirical data are lacking, our graduates lack the needed skills and knowledge to perform their duties effectively in their profession. According to communication expert Dr. Mahfuzul Haque, producing quality graduates is a complex process operating in different phases of the study programmes over time. At least four crucial factors can be identified in the process. These are: adequacy and relevancy of the course curricula, accessibility of the schools to teaching resources and academic environment of the institutes.

Traditional system we inherited from the colonial times has failed to attain the desired goals in all levels of our educational system. We must, therefore, seek for a new system. Given adequate teaching resources and having established ideal environment in the educational institutes, the semester system may prove much more effective than the present system. Academicians recommend that the semester system be introduced initially on a limited basis. The effectiveness of this system should be evaluated by experimental research designs. And the new system should be expanded gradually to all study programmes should this really prove effective by such empirical studies.

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The Bangladesh Times

