RURAL AGRICULTURAL WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME (RAWEP)- AN APPROPRIATE MODEL TO CREATE HIGH QUALITY HUMAN RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE EXTENSION SERVICES

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(Abstract)

Experiential learning is the basic approach towards problem solving and improving interaction with the outside world. The learning process imparts a direction to the students to think and act and eventually creates self-confidence. It offers a direction to the students to develop their competence, capability, capacity building, acquiring skills, expertise and a holistic development. However, it requires interest of an individual with total commitment and involvement, participation, reception, active interest, dedication, skill, curiosity, vision and mission. Under the changing dynamics of economical and industrial growth, agriculture has to undergo changes with new approaches, therefore, experiential system in agriculture has strong potential for imparting better training of the agricultural technocrats with high level of skill in combination with the modern outlook and management capacity.

Agricultural education is evolving in a very rapid manner to meet the need of the society. The students of agriculture are learning substantial basic and applied issues of science and technology; however, they do not possess adequate self-confidence in starting own commercial farming. Under this situation, Rural Agricultural Work Experience Programme (RAWEP) is an important competence and confidence building Programme introduced in some of SAUs in India. The Gujarat Agricultural University (GAU) has also accepted this concept and students of the final year B.Sc (Agri) are being exposed during this year. This Programme is a sequel of the recommendation made by the ‘Randhawa Committee’ constituted by ICAR. The committee recommended one full semester is to be earmarked for providing work experience to the students in rural setting. The experiential approach is a learner-centered approach and allows an individual student to manage and share responsibility for his learning with his teachers and hosts. Effective work experience training strategies incorporating rural agricultural experiential learning approach provide opportunities to a student of the final year to engage him in fieldwork activity and to review and analyze critically this work experience activity so that they prove to be useful in their real-life situations. The Programme is of one semester (the seventh semester) i.e. 20 weeks and will get distributed in various phases. One of the phases is meant for 21 days educational tour, which includes eleven days in Gujarat and ten days in the neighboring states. The students will be allotted to the research stations of major crops of particular zone. They will have to stay in villages with farm families, agro-based industries, co-operatives NGOs and high-tech cell during different phases of RAWE Programme. The expected outcomes from the students after this programme are learning new experiences, managing relationship, observe problems, art of negotiation, understand the real life, time management, practicing method, develop teamwork, feedback, developing art of creative thinking, art of listening, conflict management, understanding recommended technology, understanding real world, money management, working style of local institution, working with local organizations/leaders and confidence building. With a view to producing well trained graduates in the field of agriculture having broad base knowledge and technical know-how to meet the emerging challenges of sustainable extension services and make them useful partners of rural and agricultural development efforts of the state and country, Rural Agricultural Work Experience Programme (RAWEP) should also be implemented in all the State Agricultural Universities of India.
**Introduction:**

Experiential learning approaches towards problem solving and improving interaction with the world outside. The learning process essentially provides a direction to the students to think and act and eventually creates self-confidence. It helps the students develop their competence, capability, capacity building, skills, expertise, in short a holistic development. However, it requires an individual’s total commitment, involvement, participation, reception, active interest, dedication, skill, curiosity, vision and mission.

Under the changing dynamics of economical and industrial growth agriculture has undergone a sea change with new approaches. Therefore, this experiential system in agricultural academia has become imperative impart better training to the agricultural technocrats with high level of skill in combination with the modern out-look and management capacity.

Agricultural education needs to be evolved in a very rapid manner to meet the expectation of the society. Though the students of agriculture are learning substantial basic and applied issues of science and technology, they do not possess adequate confidence in starting own commercial venture. Under this situation, Rural Agricultural Work Experience Programme (RAWEP) is an important competence and confidence building Programme introduced in some of the SAUs in India. With a view to giving the real-life exposure to the students the Gujarat Agricultural University (GAU) has also introduced this programme to the students of Seventh Semester B.Sc (Agri) from this year. This Programme is a sequel of the recommendation made by the ‘Randhawa Committee’ constituted by ICAR. As per the recommendation one full semester is to be earmarked with the following objectives.

- To make them understand the rural community life and the prevailing situation.
- To familiarize with the rural socio-economic conditions.
- To provide an opportunity to have practical training in crop production.
• To improve communication skills among the students using extension teaching methods in transfer of technology.
• To sensitize them regarding agricultural technologies, used by farmers and to prepare alternate farm plans according to the local situation in consultation with the farmers.
• To develop confidence and competence in students for handling professional problems.
• To acquaint the students with on going thrust on rural development and programmes.
• To make the students understand the changed role of men and women in agricultural and allied fields.
• To explore the high-tech agricultural technology and the factors affecting the adoption of modern methods of agriculture.
• To initiate awareness, understanding & skills among the students with special reference to the scientific model of “Integrated Development of Agriculture” i.e. crop husbandry, horticulture, agro forestry, animal husbandry, fisheries, poultry, dairying, agro-based industries, processing, marketing etc.
• To know the techniques / know how to prepare and develop the package through collection of data from grass root level.
• To expose them to the research methodologies e.g. experimental techniques, management, and collection and processing of experimental data.

The experiential approach is a learner-centered approach and allows an individual student to be responsible for his own learning minimizing the role of his teachers and hosts. Effective work experience training strategies incorporating rural agricultural experiential learning approach provide opportunities to a student to experience the fieldwork activity and to review and analyze critically his own work experience so that they prove to be useful in their real-life situation.

Outlines of RAWE Programme in GAU:
The Rural Agricultural Work Experience Programme chalked out and implemented by the Gujarat Agricultural University is of one semester (the seventh semester) i.e. of 20 weeks and divided in various phases. They will get experience of the research stations of major crops of particular zone; will stay in villages with farm families, agro-based industries, co-operatives NGOs and high-tech cells during different phases of RAWE Programme. One of the phases is
meant for 21 days educational tour, which includes eleven days in Gujarat and ten days in the neighboring states.

**Phase: 1** Two week orientation programme of students/teachers – This phase is meant to introduce the RAWE to the faculty and the student and to sensitize them towards the changed attitude required in the whole programme:

**Expected outcome:**
- Understanding of the RAWE programme
- Development of team work
- Changed attitude towards learning

**Phase: 2** Four week stay with Agricultural Research Stations, Krushi Vigyan Kendra is going to help them understand what is going on in the training and research centres, the need of today’s farmers and the role of trainers and researchers. In short, this period helps them to know the middle segment between the academic and rural world better.

**Expected outcome:**
- Knowledge of working methodology
- Revelation of administration and management
- Handling practical work.
- Solving management problems
- Building confidence as an individual
- Building competence
- Knowledge of research experimental techniques
- Disclosure of recent advancement in training and research
- Knowledge of collection, compilation and analysis of experimental data

**Phase: 3** Two week stay with High-Tech cell helps the students be conversant to work with the modern gadgets like computer and the other machines we need for tissue culture and biotechnology.

**Expected outcome:**
- Working and surfing with computers
- Updating and collecting information through internet
- Understanding of greenhouse, tissue culture and bio-technology
• Having awareness about the latest technology

**Phase: 4** Four weeks stay with Farm families in villages provides the real touch of rural atmosphere so that the students plan their future career accordingly.

**Expected outcome:**
- Field experience
- Understanding real-life.
- Understanding the gap between the rural and urban people
- Ability to plan out strategy
- Understanding the mundane work & problems

**Phase: 5** One week stay with Non-governmental Organizations helps them know the issue based organizations and make them committed to the rural mass and to their profession.

**Expected outcome:**
- Knowledge of administration & management
- Experience of commitment to the cause
- Law cost management
- Personnel management
- Involving people to participate
- Understanding local institutions and their need
- Knowledge of starting an NGO

**Phase: 6** Three weeks educational tour gives various types of exposure of the facts of life with pleasure.

**Expected outcome:**
- Development of outlook
- Vision of the outside world
- Confident and competent individual

**Phase: 7** Three-week stay at Agro-based Industries and Co-operatives make them understand the meaning and nature of existing co-operatives and the change this system needs. This phase help the future entrepreneurs study the agro-based business of the neighboring area.

**Expected outcome**
- People’s participation
• Conflict management
• Management of different components
• Working with people organization
• Problem-solving attitude
• Managing Economic crisis
• Creating solution-finding atmosphere
• Impact on agricultural development
• Teamwork development

Phase: 8 One week for examination and evaluation

Expected outcome:
• Assessment of level of Knowledge after RAWE
• Assessment of level of skill
• Assessment of problem-solving ability
• Assessment of use of commonsense

Overall outcome of RAWE Programme:
As a result of practical exposure through all above phases of effective rural agricultural experiential learning approach, students entering in the new era of agricultural developmental activities would search out their following qualities to be useful partner of rural and agricultural development efforts of the state and country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences</th>
<th>Managing relationship</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation power</td>
<td>Art of negotiation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding the real life</td>
<td>Time management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop teamwork</td>
<td>developing art of creative thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive use of Feedback</td>
<td>Art of listening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Managing conflicts</td>
<td>Time management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding recommended technology</td>
<td>Understanding real world</td>
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<tr>
<td>Money management</td>
<td>Working of local institution</td>
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<td>Working with other organizations</td>
<td>Confidence building</td>
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In final phase of the Programme, the students are required to submit the detail report of RAWE. The respective subject teachers will organize the written and oral examination and evaluation will be made in grade point system.

To sum up, it’s an exposure of the principles of “learning by doing” and “seeing is believing”, which provides a direction to the students to think and act on their own. It offers a direction to the students to develop their competence, capability, capacity building, acquiring skills, expertise and a holistic development. This experiential system in agricultural education has a strong potential to prepare a better agricultural technocrats with high level of skill in combination with the modern out-look and management capacity. Under this situation, a learner-centered approach like Rural Agricultural Work Experience Programme (RAWEP) is an important competence and confidence building Programme for agricultural human resource development.

**Implication:**

With a view to producing well trained graduates in the field of agriculture having broad based knowledge and technical know how to meet the emerging challenges of sustainable extension services Rural Agricultural Work Experience Programme (RAWEP) should also be implemented in all the State Agricultural Universities of India.