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University of Fort Hare Final Year Undergraduate Agriculture Students' Perception about Practical Agricultural Experience

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Abstract

The study examined perception of the final year students of agriculture of the University of Fort Hare to practical agricultural experience. Data was obtained from a total of 334 final year undergraduate agricultural students sampled using a multi-stage sampling procedure. However, only 278 of the instruments were retrieved, giving a return rate of 83.2%. Frequency distribution, mean and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were used to analyse data. The study reveals that 56.5% were males, domiciled in the rural area (65.8%), had siblings studying agriculture (97.8%) and had an average age of about 23 years. More than half (55.0%) had favourable perception toward practical agriculture experience. Also about half had agriculture as key subjects at secondary school level (51.0%) and had their interest stimulated by their knowledge of agriculture (56.8%) back in secondary school. Level of involvement in agriculture was generally low among 53.2%). However, only about half (51.1%) expressed high level of satisfaction. Perception of students on improved performance of the programme was also unfavourable among majority (66.2%). Majority (61.9%) wanted students to be involved in practical than make it a talk shop, while 48.9% suggested that the students should be posted out to the farms for experiential learning rather than experts coming to teach. Significant relationship existed between respondents perception regarding improved performance ($r = 0.276$), general disposition to PAE ($r = 0.438$) and overall satisfaction with the PAE programme. There is the need to improve on the quality of practical agriculture experience to which undergraduate students are exposed.

Keywords: Academic performance, agricultural enterprise, experiential learning, satisfaction, theoretical work, training