



FULL LENGTH ARTICLE

Analysis of the some effective teaching quality factors within faculty members of agricultural and natural resources colleges in Tehran University



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Abstract Agricultural higher education institutions have a significant role in development of the agriculture sector and the effectiveness of higher education is dependent on the quality of teaching offered by its faculty members. The purpose of this study was to determine and classify factors related to teaching quality by members of a scientific board. The method of evaluation for this research was by evaluation of data from a descriptive survey taken with a researcher made questionnaire. The target population of the study consisted of 256 faculty members in agricultural colleges in Tehran University. A sample of 100 staff was selected through a randomized multi-stage sampling method based on the Koukran formula. The questionnaire, used as the research tool, was verified by a panel of experts. The reliability of the questionnaire was verified through calculating the Crookback Alpha coefficient equal to 0/86 following a pilot study. Data was analyzed through SPSS15/Win and results of the explorative factor analysis revealed that five components explained 74/82% of the total variance. These factors were as follows; (1) lesson plan (19.52%), (2) teaching skill (17.97%), (3) communication skills (17.93%), (4) expertise related to lesson content (10.59%), and (5) individual capabilities of members (9.15%) respectively.

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1. Introduction

Higher education represents an investment in human resources and high quality education is important for a country's cultural, social and economic development. In fact, higher education is considered as one of the most important institutions for training a skilled human workforce that leads to a country's economical, social, political and cultural development. So, development of a community can be dependent on the level of its higher education, the qualitative and quantitative development of an educational system (AkhavanKazemi, 2005).

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The quality of a higher education system is related to how it meets its targets and the means by which those targets are met and validated (Pazagadi et al., 2005).

So, attention to the quality of higher education is necessary to maximize the potential of human assets, available materials and financial resources and to coordinate between the development of an educational system and its effectiveness (NavehEbrahim and Karami, 2006). There is currently an increased number of universities in Iran, so some framework is necessary to regulate the quality of the education and services supplied by these institutions. Quality and high standards should be the main priority for every scientific and higher education institution (Sallis, 1997). The perception of quality is complicated and multidimensional (YarMohammadian, 2004) and it is difficult to define in the context of higher education unless there is some agreement on the definition of the term (Cheng, 2003). UNESCO has stated that quality in higher education depends on the environmental status of a university system and its concision or conditions as well as standards related to a specific academic field. Research has determined that quality in higher education cannot be generalized or organized according to a predetermined pattern (Bazargan, 1999) and that teaching quality is highly dependent on its professors and that the capabilities of faculty members are very important.

Research has shown that effective teaching in educational development and student learning were important considerations for evaluations of quality (Bardes and Falcone, 1998; Artiles, 1994). Teaching is a developmental process and includes interactions between a coach and his/her environment (Fuller and Brown, 1975; Steffy et al., 2000). Research has shown that good organization and comprehensive teaching in higher science education better facilitate students' success (Murry, 1987).

Other research concluded that student development in the field of education is influenced by the quality of scientific board members' teaching (Healey, 2000). Those students that experienced high quality teaching demonstrated a deeper level learning. In fact, the duty of teachers is to foster a sense of intrigue and to stimulate learning, high quality teaching encourages students to structure their knowledge and motivates students to learn independently (Trigwell and Prosser, 2004; Lindblom-Ylance and Nevgi, 2003).

Hoover and Arrington (1994) mention that the quality of scientific board member's teaching is influenced by two variables, characteristics of individuals and characteristics of the educational system. Other research found that effective teaching in higher education in agriculture was best facilitated by a teaching style that incorporated three aspects; mental, emotional and physical (Croom, 2003). Another study showed that the provision of good quality is dependent on many factors such as; a culture of high quality, a high value placed on education, good teaching staff that participate in continuous occupational development and the particular academic expertise of professors and leadership development (Lomas, 2004). Simmons (1998) found that interaction among variables such as gender of an instructor, gender of a student, the structure of a lesson, the age of a student, the difference between the average grades and the expected grades of a student in the lesson and the timing of a class all affect the quality of a scientific board member's teaching. Haygood et al. (2004) divided factors effective on an instructor's behavior in classes into two major groups, that of the individual and characteristics of an

educational environment. These groups then established the relations of quality in scientific board members' teaching with variables such as gender, values, numbers of students and the number of years of a professor's teaching experience (Haygood et al., 2004). Oliver (2003) asserts that standards and qualitative indexes in teaching and learning constitute the teaching and learning program itself, the process of a program's development path, the teaching environment, guidance for universities, student satisfaction and valuable quantitative developments. Shayesteh Fard and colleague mentioned the introduction of updates and keeping educational records in their study based on the determination of effective teaching indicators from the perspective of scientific board members and students in the field; other research has also emphasized a positive correlation between a professor's educational record and skills applied to the teaching process (Ghaderi and Dastjerdi, 2003; ShayestehFard, 2003; Salehi et al., 2004). ShabaniVorki (2006) found that lesson design, teaching execution, teaching evaluation and interpersonal relations are the most important indicators determining teaching quality in universities.

Furthermore, there is a basic difference between teaching quality in the current situation and that in an optimum situation. The priorities of effective teaching are teaching method and the power of communication of knowledge employed by a teacher (Asgari and MahjubMoadab, 2010). Teaching method, communication power, knowledge seeking and personal character have been allocated as the most important attributes of effective teaching (Zohur and Eslami, 2002).

Results from the interview regarding potential obstacles to good quality instruction in universities are placed into four categories; unsuitability of strategies and educational programs, lack of employment and assurance of students' future opportunities, the focus on quantity and less attention to the quality of education in evaluations and out of date knowledge of some members of a scientific board (Hoveida and Moulavi, 2008).

Due to the low quality of teaching, development of a comprehensive program to improve the quality of teaching is essential. Unfortunately there is not a comprehensive understanding of the quality of teaching and factors influencing it in the studied region. The basic research question is, what factors are influencing the teaching quality of agricultural education teachers.

The aim of the current study is to investigate the factors that affect the quality of teaching and results of the study can improve teaching quality in higher education courses.

Table 1 Personal traits of agricultural faculty members.

Variable name	Range	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20–30	8	8
	31–40	31	31
	41–50	26	26
	51–60	27	27
	51 and above	8	8
Teaching antecedent	1–5	22	22
	6–10	23	23
	11–15	17	17
	16–20	14	14
	20 and above	24	24

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