

Holistic Approach in Strengthening of Agricultural Education

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Received: July 22, 2019; **Published:** August 08, 2019

Keywords: *Agricultural Education; Private Initiative; Infrastructure; Practice; ICT; Platform*

Agriculture is a key sector for surviving of humanity, although sometimes it is underestimated by the stakeholders in many countries, especially in the developing countries. Unfortunately, in the last decades globally it is not attractive profession for the new generations as a job choice and career development. From the other side, the needs for food and other by-products of agriculture including the livestock production are rapidly increasing due to the fast growth of human population worldwide. Such contradictory situation create a gap between the needs of the labor market from one side and educational institutions dealing with agriculture in secondary and higher education.

The agricultural education covers and deals with different areas such as food production and food processing, all types of beverages, textile and leather industry etc. Improved and modernized education will result with a labor force that will certainly meet better the labor market needs. Modernization of agricultural education need to have a holistic approach and synchronized action including: appropriate vocational secondary schools, professional colleges, academic agricultural institutions and private providers of non-formal and informal agricultural education from one side, the potential beneficiaries (farmers and employers) and state stakeholders (decision makers).

The overall objectives of such process of modernization and strengthening of agricultural education would be:

- Improvement of quality and availability of agricultural education;
- Strengthening of overall competences of all educators involved in educational institutions dealing with agricultural education, and
- Creation of the “open source” repository of contents, tools, registers, databases for educators in the area of agricultural education.

In order to achieve these ambitious objectives, many prerogatives and preconditions are needed to be fulfilled. The first one is to assure infrastructural support for development of agricultural education by providing experimental facilities and modern laboratories as *condicio sine qua non* for accreditation and verification of the institutional providers of such education.

The next precondition is modernization of the teaching contents following the contemporary trends in agriculture and sharing of good practices with the best educational institutions in the field of agriculture. Based on that, it will be crucial to strengthen especially the practical component of the teaching process using the novel ICT achievements (technical tools, software etc).

Not less important is the continuous improvement of the pedagogical competences of university and vocational teachers and professional competences of the experts from extension services by providing training and retraining in prominent institutions - providers of such formal and informal courses. It should be followed by efficient system for quality assurance and control using benchmarks and descriptors of acquired qualifications.

For the general public, it is necessary to work on radical change of the perception about the agricultural education which is currently not attractive for the youth. In that sense, it needs to develop and promote appropriate campaigns among the pupils in primary and general secondary schools showing the experiments and actions whose will change that negative perception.

And finally, very important prerogative for further development of agricultural education is more private initiatives. The corporations, companies and successful individual producers need to find a common interest and to invest in opening of new institutions - providers of modern agricultural teaching process, which will rapidly increase the competitiveness among the current ones who are facing with the routine as main reason for current status of agricultural education.

Based on all those activities and using previous experiences it will be useful to create the available repository full of syllabuses, study programs, teaching tools and materials, innovations, database on educational institutions and educators etc. It can serve as an open access platform for all individuals and institutions interested in agricultural education.

The stakeholders need to undertake appropriate steps to adjust the qualifications of all beneficiary categories in agricultural education (students, farmers, educators, trainers, experts, decision makers) according to International and National Qualification Frameworks.

Volume 5 Issue 9 September 2019

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