

E3022. INNOVATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES THAT PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL

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Abstract

Transforming agricultural education in Universities is critical to enable them to contribute to the realization of Vision 2030 for the agriculture sector. Since the mid 1980's faculties of agriculture have experienced changes that include reduced government funding, reduced student enrolment, increased competition for students, and changes in the role of government as the traditional employer for Agricultural graduates. Universities must therefore respond to these changes by designing relevant and responsive curricula using appropriate delivery methods responsive to the changing demands of sustainable production systems and market driven economies. Graduates require knowledge, skills, attitudes and professional competencies to enable them effectively engage rural communities in developing innovative solutions to their complex problems. To achieve these objectives there is need to develop student centred learning systems that reward innovative and adaptable graduates. This demands a paradigm shift from dyadic transfer of information to experiential and problem-based learning approaches. A study was done to evaluate teaching-learning strategies used by lecturers in two universities, Nairobi and Egerton. The objectives of the study were to assess the lecturer's perceptions and understanding of experiential learning and problem based learning. The study also sought to determine the instructional methods used in the universities and evaluate adequacy of teaching – learning resources. A cross sectional research design was used and data was collected using questionnaires and document analysis. Majority of the lecturers had no formal training on teaching methodologies and were not aware of the contents of the ISO 9001:2008 document on teaching standards. The study showed that lectures were the main instruction method used, and large classes and inappropriate classroom infrastructure made it difficult to use other instructional methods. Further, the lecturers understanding of experiential learning was quite diverse, in most cases showing a lack of understanding of the concept. There is need to retool and equip staff with the appropriate skills and provide the necessary infrastructure and resources to facilitate lecturers to adapt student centred teaching-learning approaches.

KEY WORDS: Experiential learning, Lecturers, Students, Teaching – learning strategies.