



DIVERSITY OF VETERINARY EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN SAARC COUNTRIES

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Abstract

Generally, it has been observed that veterinary education systems in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries; namely, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, follow a similar pedagogical principle, although there is a vast diversity and disparity. There are 75 veterinary academic institutions that are offering veterinary education in the SAARC region. A regional study was conducted to identify the disparities and gaps in the existing veterinary education system of SAARC countries. The purpose of the study was to propose a harmonized veterinary education system in the SAARC countries considering the guidelines of OIE to harness more benefits nationally as well as regionally. The veterinary education program varies from one SAARC country to another and even in the different universities within a country. This study focuses on the differences in veterinary education among the SAARC countries with special emphasis on veterinary academic institutions, degrees and curricula. It is evident that 3 veterinary academic institutions of Afghanistan, 9 of Bangladesh and 12 of Pakistan offer the DVM (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine) degree, and 44 veterinary academic institutions (public & private) of India and 3 of Nepal offer the BVSc & AH (Bachelor of Veterinary Science & Animal Husbandry) degree, whereas only one faculty of Sri Lanka offers the BVSc (Bachelor of Veterinary Science) degree. In addition, two academic institutions of Bangladesh and one of Pakistan offer the BSc AH degree (Bachelor of Science in Animal Husbandry). The differences of degrees (DVM, BSc AH, BVSc, BVSc & AH), curricula and credit hours are discussed. The total credit hours of veterinary courses also varied from 177 to 221. Duration of education varied from 5 to 5.5 years and duration of internship varied from 6-12 months. Great differences were observed in numbers of academic departments within institutions; 3-19. It also appeared that the major role of the veterinary profession remains primarily related to food animals in SAARC countries rather than companion animals.

Keywords: course-curricula – degrees – diversity – education – veterinary – OIE

Introduction

Agriculture is the dominant sector of SAARC regional economy; majority of the population still relies on agriculture for employment and livelihood. Livestock sector, since time immemorial, is an integral part of regional agriculture and in the era of “ever green revolution” its significance is further augmented. Livestock sector plays an important role in the national economy and in the socio-economic development of the region. However, agriculture especially livestock plays significant role in each SAARC countries economy in respect of employment, poverty alleviation, food security and safety and also contribute to national GDP. The veterinary medical knowledge and techniques are interrelated throughout the world and the veterinary educational activities involving interdisciplinary interactions with both human and ecosystem with one world, one medicine, one health’ global perspective has been suggested but shortcomings in veterinary education program are greatly persist in many countries, especially in developing world. All veterinarians in every nation are responsible for the delivery of National Veterinary Services that is, services provided under the legislative framework and the auspices of the governmental authority of a country to implement animal health to assure the health and wellbeing of animals, people and ecosystems. Veterinary education is a cornerstone to assure that the graduating veterinarian not only has received a level of education and training that ensures sound overall competencies, but also has the required knowledge, skills, attitudes and aptitudes to understand and be able to perform entry-level national veterinary service tasks that relate to the promotion of animal and public health. In addition, basic education that provides the minimum competencies is a basis on which veterinarians whether working in the public or private sector can build expertise through on-the-job training and quality postgraduate continuing education.

Discussion

The six SAARC countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) have established veterinary graduation education, whereas the remaining two countries, Bhutan and Maldives have not yet started veterinary education. The Veterinary association and Veterinary council have been founded in the SAARC countries but the accreditation program and pre-vet med (BS) requirement to enter the DVM program like United States are not yet practiced. The 3 universities of Afghanistan, 9 of Bangladesh and 12 of Pakistan offer the DVM degree but the veterinary profession in Bangladesh is under a great challenge due to competition of two types of graduates (DVM and BSc AH) in a veterinary medical profession. The 44 veterinary academic institutions of India and 3 institution of Nepal offer a combined BVSc & AH degree, whereas only 1 faculty of Sri Lanka offers BVSc degree. In addition to the core veterinary degree, BS, BS (hons), BSc and B. Tech degrees in dairy science and/or technology, and poultry science also offer from different universities of SAARC countries especially India and Pakistan.

Nomenclature of Veterinary Academic Institutes: The nomenclatures of the Veterinary institutions are also varied greatly. All the 3 veterinary institution in Afghanistan named as Faculty of Veterinary Science (FVS). In Bangladesh, 5 types of nomenclatures are used; 1 named as FVS, 1 as Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Science, 1 as Faculty of Animal Science and Veterinary Medicine, 1 as Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (FVM) and 4 as Faculty of Veterinary and Animal Sciences. In India, 9 different nomenclatures of Veterinary academic institutions are used which include 6 as Veterinary College, 9 as College of Veterinary Science, 11 as College of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry (CVS & AH), 2 as Faculty of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry, 8 as College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, 1 as Faculty of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, 3 as College of Veterinary and Research Institute, 1 as College of Veterinary Medicine and 1 as Veterinary Institute. In Pakistan, 5 different nomenclatures are used to designate the Veterinary academic institutions which include 3 as FVS, 4 as CVS, 2 as Faculty of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Science, 2 as Faculty of Veterinary and Animal Science and 1 as College of Veterinary and Animal Science. There is only 1 Veterinary institution in Sri Lanka named as Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science offers BVSc degree. In addition, there are 14 veterinary related universities have established in SAARC countries, of which 7 named as Veterinary and Animal Science University, 1 as Veterinary University, 2 as University of Animal and Fisheries Sciences, 1 as University of Veterinary, Animal and Fishery Sciences, 2 as Pashu Chikitsa Vigan Vishvavidyalaya and 1 as Kamdhenu Vishvavidyalaya.

Degree and Course Curricula: All 44 veterinary academic institutes of India offer combined degree program in veterinary science and animal husbandry (BVSc & AH) with uniform core curriculum in five academic years including compulsory internship of six month duration. Total credit hours are 177 where 101 theory and 76 practical. Similarly, there are 9 veterinary academic institutes in Bangladesh which are offering similar degree DVM but course curricula are not similar. The veterinary education is five years duration for 10 semesters including compulsory 6-12 months internship. Bangladesh Veterinary Council (BVC) recommended a harmonized curriculum for a combined DVM degree for five years duration for 10 semesters which comprises 189 credit hours where 125 theory and 64 practical but probably none of the veterinary academic institutions follows such curriculum for DVM degree program. Three academic institutes of Nepal are offering BVSc & AH degree with five and half years duration and total credit hours 221 including 6 months compulsory internship. In Pakistan there are 12 veterinary educational institutes offers DVM degree with similar course curricula. The education is five years duration for 10 semesters which comprises 171 credit hours where 109 theory and 62 practical including 6 months internship.

Departments Prevailing in Veterinary Educational Institutes: There are 5-6 departments in all 3 veterinary educational institutes of Afghanistan. In Bangladesh there are 8-10 departments in all veterinary educational institutes. Similarly, there are 15-19 departments are working in most of the veterinary educational institutes of India. In Pakistan there are 5-8 departments are functioning in most of the veterinary educational institutes. In Nepal 9-15 and in Sri Lanka there are 5 departments are functioning. The different nomenclatures of veterinary academic departments are 37, 50 and 38 in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan respectively.

Conclusion

It is evident that there is a remarkable diversity in the offered veterinary educations of SAARC countries in terms of nomenclature of veterinary academic institutes, degrees, duration of education, course curricula, academic departments, credit hours and duration of internship. It is suggested a harmonized veterinary education system considering the guidelines of OIE and American Veterinary Medical Association to harness more benefits for the country as well as regionally. A recommendation has been made to establish a combined DVM program in SAARC countries with core veterinary curriculum to reflect the length of the veterinary degree programme and pre veterinary course requirement. It is essential to establish and strengthened national level statutory body like Veterinary Council in each SAARC countries to ensure quality veterinary education. The accreditation system must be started to ensure quality and continuous improvement through a rigorous and comprehensive peer review.