

HORIZONS IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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Developments already taking place in agricultural education, and those which we may anticipate as a result of probable new Federal legislation, have many implications for change in teacher education in agriculture.

Although not implicit in the law, there is evidence that vocational programs of the future may no longer be limited to specific subject fields, but may cross boundaries separating two or more areas. It is highly probable that the teacher of agriculture in the future may need to be more completely trained as a vocational teacher and capable of designing programs of instruction which lead to employment in other fields as well as agriculture. There is already some evidence of this trend. At least one state is experimenting with a ninth-grade course for small schools, which is an introduction to vocational education and which would enroll not only agriculture students, but all those in the school, boys and girls, who should be receiving occupational training. In this state, most often the teacher is the teacher of vocational agriculture.

Work-study programs, following the pattern of diversified occupations programs, may well be the responsibility of the teacher of vocational agriculture, especially in small rural schools. In many such schools, the Vo-Ag teacher is often the only vocationally trained person on the faculty and it may be assumed that not all pupils, even in strictly rural areas, may be interested in or expect to follow farming or other agricultural occupations. It has frequently been said that, in many rural areas, schools should be training some students away from agriculture and for other occupations. Agriculture teachers may be called upon to assist or even take the lead in this activity.

With increased support for post-high school education of the junior college, area school, community college type in the offing, it may be increasingly the province of teacher educators in agriculture to prepare more instructors for positions in these institutions. Preparation for this service may put more emphasis upon occupational experience and advanced preparation, at the equivalent of the master's degree level.

With the emphasis that is noted in new Federal legislation upon training out of school youth and adults for employment and retraining those already employed, and with specific support earmarked for such education, it may be more important, in training vocational agriculture teachers for the future, to provide the preparation which will enable them to organize, plan, and supervise instruction for adults, than to train them to do this kind of instruction themselves.

Another area in which we should broaden or add to the preparation provided prospective teachers, is to develop understanding of the importance of a curricular approach in planning the instruction needed by a vocational student. Doubtless we have prepared teachers pretty well in selecting and planning courses of study in agriculture and have convinced them of the

importance of such planning. How well we have trained them to be concerned about the total instructional program for their students is at least open to question. It is already important that we do this and may become increasingly so in the immediate future.

Finally, many states are now in the process, as a result of the criticisms levelled at education in general and teacher preparation in particular, of examining critically the certification requirements for teaching. Some are reducing drastically the number of professional education courses required for certification. This movement may result in significant changes in course patterns and sequences for the training of agriculture teachers imposed from outside our ranks. At least one writer has commented recently to the effect that, while teacher education in agriculture at one time was a vigorous, forward looking program, in recent years we may have grown smug and self-satisfied, with the result that we may have fallen behind the parade. If this be true, there is much in what is happening nationally and in many states to jar us out of any possible complacency we may have, and challenge us to once again be a dynamic force in the total program of teacher education in the years ahead.