

## THE ROLE OF THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION TEACHER EDUCATOR YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW

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To document the ever-changing role of the agricultural education teacher educator and forecast what it will be like in the future is a daunting task. Our profession, though a relatively new one, has a rich history and an unknown future. Perhaps it is best to first look at the known - what has been. The examination should begin with the true pioneer teacher educator - the first American public school teacher educator. While that individual was not in agricultural education, he was definitely a pioneer and set several precedents for today's agricultural education teacher educators.

### First Public School Teacher Educator

On July 3, 1839, (Newton, 1937) the first continuously operated state normal school held its initial classes in Lexington, Massachusetts. The Lexington school (later moved to Framingham, Massachusetts) started rather slowly with just three students, all females. Many people worked hard to make the school a possibility. None worked harder than the former President of the Massachusetts Senate and later the Secretary of Education - Horace Mann. Mann cajoled politicians and raised private funds for his pet project of providing professional training for future teachers. However, his most important decision was selecting the first teacher educator. The individual he selected was Cyrus Peirce (pronounced purse).

Cyrus Peirce graduated from Harvard in 1810 and from the Harvard Divinity School in 1815. He served as both a minister and a teacher (Peirce & Swift, 1969). He had just the perfect background for the innovative work upon which he embarked in 1839.

His employment began three weeks before the

students arrived. During those three weeks Peirce had to establish the first public school teacher education curriculum in the United States. The curriculum he established was as follows:

1. A thorough review of the "common branches" - spelling, reading, writing, grammar, geography, and arithmetic - required by law to be taught in the "common schools."
2. Advanced studies (except ancient languages) so far as time permits.
3. The physical, mental, and manual development of teachers.
4. The science and art (i.e., principles and methods) of teaching each of the "common branches."
5. The art of school government, i.e., the organization of the day's work, rewards, punishments, and discipline in general.
6. Practice in teaching and governing a "model or experimental school" (Peirce & Swift 1969).

Cyrus Peirce, as the only employee of the Lexington Normal School, had many roles to fill. In addition to being the teacher educator, he was the developer of curriculum, the only member of committees, president of the college, principal of the laboratory school, janitor, chief disciplinarian and role model for a group of adolescent females. The latter role earned him the title Father Peirce as he was the father figure for a group of young females euphemistically called "ewe lambs." Because of the heavy work load and extreme responsibilities, Peirce

ruined his health and, in 1842, had to take two years away from his many jobs (Peirce & Swift, 1969).

Despite financial, political, and health problems, the early attempts at publicly supported teacher education succeeded and gained enough respectability to be expanded to numerous normal schools throughout the country. While the primary purpose of normal schools was to produce elementary teachers, the groundwork was laid to produce teachers in other grade levels and other areas of subject matter expertise. What was to become agricultural education teacher education clearly benefitted from the work of such pioneers as Cyrus Peirce.

#### Early Teacher Education in Agricultural Education

Pinpoint the exact time a profession begins is frequently difficult. Typically, it is more of an evolutionary process that developed step by step over a long period of time. Agricultural education teacher education is typical of this type of development.

#### Congressional District Agricultural Schools

An early version of teacher education was provided at Congressional District Agricultural Schools that were established initially in 1889 in Alabama, 1906 in Georgia, and as late as 1908 in Virginia (Hillison, 1989). The school's major purpose was to provide instruction, in a comprehensive school setting, for agricultural education and home economics education. The agricultural education program was about equally academic and vocational. A minor purpose was to prepare teachers. The latter preparation was primarily accomplished by having older students, with some degree of supervision, teach younger students. Such experience did, occasionally, lead to a career in teaching for a graduate of the schools (Inge, 1988).

#### Nelson Amendment

The Nelson Amendment to the Agricultural Appropriations Bill was passed March 4, 1907, (Robinson & Jencks, 1913). Its purpose was to authorize the expenditure of federal funds to colleges of agriculture for providing courses for the preparation of instructors to teach the elements of agriculture and mechanic arts. By 1908, \$25,000 was appropriated annually to each state for such a purpose (Wheeler, 1948). It was possible for some states to receive as much as \$50,000 annually. Coming at about the same time as the establishment of the Congressional District Agricultural Schools, this Amendment gave another boost and some recognition to the profession of agricultural education teacher education.

At this very time the United States Department of Agriculture was promoting agricultural education and providing instructional materials for teachers. In 1901 Dick Crosby was hired as a special assistant to A. C. True, Director of Experiment Stations, to work with agricultural education (True, 1929). C. H. Lane reported that a Division of Agricultural Education was established in the Office of Experiment Stations in 1906 (cited in Stimson & Lathrop, 1942).

#### Smith-Hughes Act

Passage of the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917 suddenly fostered a great interest in agricultural education. States were rapidly signing up for Federal money to support the agricultural education program. Students by the thousands were signing up for classes. Consequently, a great demand for agricultural education teachers arose. Congress recognized this great potential demand and made provisions for it in the Act. The Act stated (Vocational Education Act, 1917):

That for the purpose of cooperating with the States in preparing teachers, supervisors, and directors of agricultural subjects there is hereby appropriated for

the use of the States for the fiscal year ending June thirtieth, nineteen hundred and eighteen, the sum of \$500,000; ... for the fiscal year ending June thirtieth, nineteen hundred and twenty-one, and annually thereafter the sum of \$1 ,000,000. (p. 3)

The Second Annual Report of the Federal Board for Vocational Education published in 19 18 reported a great deal of progress in the training of agricultural education teachers. It reported that every state had made plans for teacher preparation and had designated the institutions where such training would occur. The detailed tables in the Reoort showed 40 teacher training centers (p. 95), 116 teacher trainers (p. 96), and 1,534 students enrolled in agricultural education teacher training programs (p. 98).

With the sudden great demand for teacher education programs and teacher educators, a modest crisis was created. Where to find the guiding principles for curriculum establishment and the people to implement such programs? Obviously, looking to graduates of agricultural education departments was impossible. The earliest pioneer teacher educators in agricultural education were similar to Cyrus Peirce; they had to blaze new paths.

#### Role of Pioneer Teacher Educators in Agricultural Education

If we use the teacher educator founders of the Future Farmers of Virginia as an example of pioneer teacher educators, we find a potpourri of educational backgrounds. Edmund Magill received his bachelor's degree in horticulture from Kansas State College in 1912; Henry Groseclose received a junior college degree from Washington and Lee University in 1917 and agricultural education bachelor's and master's degrees from Virginia Tech in later years (History of Bland County, 1992, p. 428); Walter Newman received his bachelor's degree in liberal arts from Hampden-Sydney College in 19 17; while Harry Sanders received his bachelors

degree in animal science at Virginia Tech.

The pioneer agricultural education teacher educators had to establish administrative structures, which were typically agricultural education departments in a college or university. At the same time debates continued about how to best prepare agricultural education teachers. Some wanted to convert nature- study teachers, others wanted to convert science teachers, some wanted to take the best farmers and make teachers out of them, while others wanted to use college of agriculture graduates as teachers (Hill&on, 1987). These issues were debated both before and after passage of the Smith-Hughes Act. Those who wanted a unique pedagogically and subject matter-based curriculum with a major in agricultural education eventually carried the day.

After the administrative battle was won over establishing departments of agricultural education, primarily located in colleges of agriculture, the pioneer teacher educators had to deal with many other fundamental issues. Agricultural educators were all in new positions and doing new things. State supervisors were even newer than teacher educators. What was going to be the relationship between supervisors and teacher educators? With supervisors administering the program, would the relationship be one of equals or more a master-servant relationship? With supervisors holding the purse strings, what role would the teacher educator play in working with classroom teachers? Would in-service teachers pay any attention to teacher educators, especially if there was a philosophical disagreement existed between the teacher educator and the supervisor?

In addition to establishing new working relationships, the role of the pioneer teacher educator in agricultural education would be similar to that of Cyrus Peirce. Curriculum had to be established; college and university committees had to be convinced that such a major as agricultural education needed to exist and that courses for that major should be taught. Who would write the

textbooks for such courses? What experiential base would authors have for writing such books? Decisions had to be made about a practicum experience. How long should it be? Where should it be located? Who should serve as cooperating teachers, when virtually all teachers were not only new to their positions, but also to the profession?

T. J. Horne (as cited in Horne, 1957) in his 1952 Distinguished Lecture or "Mystery Speech" indicated the extent to which he perceived the contribution of the pioneer teacher educators.

The foundation has been built, strong and secure with ample provision for continuous growth. The growth of these early builders in stature, understanding and abilities have (sic) made it easier for their followers to better equip themselves for the role of the teacher educator of our modern time. (p. 97)

Using skill and determination the pioneer teacher educators got our profession started and made it, not only acceptable, but also successful. Future generations of teacher educators would benefit a great deal from their work. We can see an example of that if we move ahead four decades and note what teacher educators of the 1950s were doing. This is a good decade to visit, as it is approximately a midpoint between 1917 and the current year.

#### Role of the Teacher Educator of the 1950s or a "Pure" Decade

The fundamental assumptions made for the typical agricultural education major of this decade was that the clientele would be an undergraduate, male, a former high school agricultural education student, former FFA member, and an individual who had grown up on a farm. This individual at one time or another had probably sat by a rising sun or a plow and now wanted to sit by an owl. He had learned good farm practices on a home farm and in the classroom. He would now go forward and, on

something of a missionary crusade, would teach the same practices in the same way.

At the 1950 Teacher Educators' Breakfast Distinguished Lecture at the beginning of the pure decade with its almost exclusive emphasis on work with pre-service and in-service activities, J. Bryant Kirkland described an active role for agricultural education teacher educators. He indicated that teacher educators needed to select prospective pre-service students more carefully; work to improve the instruction taught in basic sciences, technical agriculture, and general and professional education courses; expand professional education laboratory experiences beyond just student teaching; utilize research more extensively; develop subject matter service such as curriculum materials; and do more planning for in-service training (Kirkland as cited in Horne, 1957).

In a dissertation completed at the University of Illinois in 1954, Thomas Gandy conducted a national study to determine the duties and responsibilities of agricultural education teacher educators. He found that teacher educators were spending 54.1% of their time on providing instruction. They spent 8.4% of their time directing and conducting research, 6.1% attending professional meetings and developing better relationships, 6.0% of their time was spent on guidance and counseling, and 5.9% of their time providing itinerant teacher education.

The itinerant teacher educator was rather common in the 1950s, but unique today. Gandy (1954) used the definition for the itinerant teacher educator as a "traveling employee of a teacher-training institution or state board for vocational education who provides individual and group instruction for employed teachers of vocational agriculture, either in the schools in which these teachers are employed or at nearby centers" (pp. 9-10). He distinguished the itinerant teacher educator from the resident teacher educator, whose position was mainly on-campus.

By the time Gandy's study was conducted in 1954, an important change had occurred in the background of teacher educators, as compared to the pioneer teacher educators. Virtually all had experience as a vocational agriculture teacher. Of the 152 respondents for his study, 151 reported secondary teaching experience. He compared that finding to school year 1938-39 when 9.8% reported no teaching experience and to 1922-23 when 17.6% of the teacher educators reported no teaching experience.

Gandy (1954) noted that 36.8% of his respondents had doctorates, while 33.1% had doctorates in 1938-39 and 4.6% had doctorates in 1922-23. His study reported that 61.2% had masters degrees, with corresponding figures of 53.3% in 1938-39 and 53.8% in 1922-23.

He further noted a slight preference for administrative departmental location in colleges of agriculture. Of the 55 departments reported, 26 were located in colleges of agriculture, 22 in colleges of education, two in a combination of colleges of agriculture and education, two in vocational divisions, one each in rural education, liberal arts, and science and applied arts.

By the end of the decade, in 1959, Herbert Hamlin (as cited in Horne, 1957) used the Distinguished Lecture forum to forecast the future role of the teacher educator. He did this by noting four general principles.

1. Appropriate agricultural education should be provided for all Americans, not merely for farmers or workers in agricultural occupations.
2. Agricultural education should be provided in every unit of the public school system: elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, community college, technical institute, adult division.
3. Agricultural education must find its place in

a new comprehensive institution designed to provide education beyond the high school for those who do not belong in the four-year colleges and universities.

4. Long-term public policy for the development of public school education in agriculture must be evolved in the school districts, the states, and the nation.

#### Role of the Teacher Educator in the 1990s

Various trends in the role of the agricultural education teacher educator have come into play during the current decade. The trend toward returning administrative units to colleges of agriculture has continued. While pioneer teacher educators were almost exclusively located in colleges of agriculture, as new colleges of education were established, agricultural education units were often placed there. Just as Gandy noted a slight majority of agricultural education departments in colleges of agriculture in 1954, Binkley (1977) reported two-thirds located in colleges of agriculture. By the decade of the 1990s that number was even higher.

While neither the college of agriculture nor the college of education agricultural education program has a monopoly on success, differences occurred in daily operations and beliefs. The college of agriculture program faculty is more likely to count subject matter faculty and cooperative extension personnel as colleagues. The college of education program faculty is more likely to count vocational educators and educational psychologists as colleagues. This daily peer influence colors beliefs and philosophies.

Typical position announcements from the current decade also reflect the changing role of the agricultural education teacher educator as influenced by colleges of agriculture, departmental structures that are diverse, and the less "pure" nature of the contemporary teacher educator's role. Today's position announcements describe the role

of the teacher educator as one who must be able to prepare future teachers and in-service current teachers, but do other things as well. Those other things include teach agricultural communications courses, work with cooperative extension agents, coordinate distance learning, work with rural sociologists, teach leadership courses, coordinate technology, and work with Agriculture in the Classroom. Minimum requirements typically include a doctorate in agricultural education and a minimum of three years teaching experience which could be at either the high school or the middle school level.

The role of today's teacher educator includes greater statewide leadership than has been the case in most years before. The pioneer teacher educator typically had his greatest influence on teaching methodology and curriculum development. As the position of the state supervisor has changed and weakened, classroom teachers have looked more and more to their teacher educators for leadership. Teacher educators have assumed a greater role in the hiring process of teachers, as well as in the perennial battles with Congress and state legislatures.

#### Role of Tomorrow's Teacher Educator

Historians become a bit uneasy when they write about almost contemporary events, say those only 25 years old. They become downright uncomfortable when looking at the present. They frequently pass out from pain when having to look to the future.

The adage of "history repeating itself" makes it much easier to predict the future for the typical historian. Winston Churchill stated this point so eloquently when he said, "The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see." (Cornerstones, 1996, p. 72)

If Churchill is accurate, then the future of our profession is easier to predict. For example, we can quite possibly forecast that agricultural

education leadership at the federal level will return to the United States Department of Agriculture. I believe that return will then serve as a model for state leadership to move to state departments of agriculture. For the university level, I believe we will also see a near unanimous return to the college of origin, that of agriculture. These trends are already in place and will have a profound effect upon the teacher educator's role. With increased influence from the subject matter experts of the college of agriculture and less from vocational educators, both the middle school and secondary program will become more of an applied science. Our high school program will feel more influence from academic educators and will be less likely located in vocational departments and more likely located in science departments, much closer to the principal's front office. There will be many more elementary teachers using agriculture as a medium for their teaching. Agricultural education teacher educators will help train and provide in-service to kindergarten through adult teachers. Teacher educators will work more closely with the Cooperative Extension Service and help prepare agents.

With the increasing demise of state supervisors' positions and consequent influence, the role of the teacher educator will increasingly include more statewide leadership. The term joint staff will take on new meaning with the lead teacher educator typically determining the agenda and serving as the most influential agricultural educator in the state. This role will include increasing political responsibility and work with support commodity groups and politically active groups such as Farm Bureau. I believe the role will be more and more like that of the teacher educator before we had supervisors.

A brief summary of the future teacher educator's role is that we will work with a primary clientele of teachers who instruct students from pre-school age through adults and who are equally academic and vocational. We will work with a secondary clientele of a very diverse group such as

agricultural communicators, extension agents, and others with close ties to agriculture.

From an historian's birds-eye view, the role of tomorrow's teacher educator will, in many ways, become more like that of the pioneer teacher educator. New ground will have to be plowed, a new clientele will be worked with, and new curriculum will be established. I am looking forward to the new role,

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