IS TEACHER EDUCATION IN AGRICULTURE A PROFESSION?

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If teacher education in agriculture is a profession, we need evidence to that effect. Suitable evidences are text materials, periodical articles, bulletins, and professional organizations and programs. A profession such as ours also implies that its membership receive special training on a post masters level. What should this training be?

Let us also identify our problems and areas of interest as a profession. We need to identify the benchmarks of our professional structure. As a profession our primary purpose is to provide pre-service and in-service education for teachers of agriculture. We need to identify this curriculum content - graduate and undergraduate.

What courses are needed in livestock enterprises and nutrition, in soils and plant science? What courses are needed for grain enterprises, grass and forage, and range? What courses and course content are needed in the area of agricultural mechanics?

What about professional education courses? What are the contributions of psychology, both general and educational? What about general and special methods? How can we make our student teaching experience more effective? Should student teachers have experience in teaching other subjects than agriculture, or is agriculture a full-time teaching program? How can we adjust to the general prevailing patterns of teacher certification which may be a must anyway?

What is our role as teacher educators? What contributions can we make in the areas of state and local courses of study, methods, and teaching aids? What can we do on program development including adult education? What can we do to improve the existing image of project work, work experience, agricultural science, and agricultural mechanics? What can we suggest as special courses to meet the broadening scope of agricultural education as it reflects agriculture as an industry? What contributions can we make to the periodic statement of objectives for vocational agriculture? How can these objectives be better researched?

College or university inter-department relationships are important. Should we strive to maintain our position as separate departments. Should we encourage the formation of Vocational-Technical Teacher Education as a single working department within the division of education, such as was recently established at the University of Illinois? Can we join forces with home economics, trade and industry, distributive education, and commerce? Can we combine enrollments in teacher education classes and strengthen our individual departments?

In considering our primary purpose, are we limited to training only teachers of agriculture. Is our position on objectives and purposes much like that of our secondary school program in vocational agriculture, which implies training in farming for agricultural occupations? Similarly, teacher education in agriculture can provide training in teacher education for agricultural occupations. This broader purpose would provide a more vital reservoir of prospective teachers of agriculture.

If we believe strongly in our program, we should support it with earnest recruitment efforts. We need a genuine assist from teachers of agriculture. We need to look for evidences of effective recruitment on the part of ourselves as well as others.

How can we best exert our leadership and assistance in the development of vocational agriculture and related programs? We need to work with teachers themselves as well as supervisors. The NVATA and affiliate state groups are fast increasing in stature. The local teacher is generally the key doer.

Somewhere we need to see the evidence of our professional framework of teacher education in agriculture. The American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture must lead the way to strengthen programs of professional preparation and in-service training of its present and future membership.