

VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE TEACHER AND PROGRAM FACTORS RELATED TO FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA ALUMNI AFFILIATES

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Development of an alumni organization has been a topic of discussion among agricultural educators since 1928, the year that the Future Farmers of America (FFA) was founded. However, it was not until 1969 that the delegates at the National FFA Convention established the alumni classification of membership in the National FFA Constitution. Two years later, nine states were presented State FFA Alumni Association charters. On May 12, 1972, the National FFA Alumni Association was formally organized at a meeting in Chicago, Illinois, with a total of 31 state affiliates (Bender, Hansen, Newcomb and Hansen, 1979).

Alumni membership is open to individuals interested in supporting the FFA, regardless of whether or not they were former members of the FFA. The basic purpose of the FFA Alumni is to invite support for vocational agriculture education, to strengthen the FFA, and to promote a greater knowledge of the agricultural industry at local, state, and national levels (Bender, et. al., 1979).

The North Carolina FFA Alumni Association was one of the charter affiliates of the national organization in 1972. However, membership growth in the state association has been very poor. Knowing that the purpose of the FFA Alumni Association is to support the local vocational agriculture program, a need exists to determine why acceptance of the FFA Alumni has been less than favorable in North Carolina.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine similarities and/or differences between North Carolina vocational agriculture programs and teachers who were serving as advisors of local FFA alumni affiliates and those who were not. More specifically, the study examined education, work experience, and teaching responsibility factors of vocational agriculture teachers in North Carolina to determine which factors, if any, were common only to those teachers serving as advisors of local FFA alumni affiliates.

Methodology

The population for this study consisted of all vocational agriculture teachers in public secondary schools in North Carolina. The study sample was comprised of 26 vocational agriculture teachers who serve as advisors of active FFA alumni affiliates

and 26 vocational agriculture teachers who teach in schools where an alumni affiliate is not a part of the agricultural program. The sample included 100 percent of the population of teachers serving as advisors of active local FFA alumni chapters affiliated in North Carolina during the 1979-80 school year and an equal number of teachers from agriculture programs not having an alumni chapter. The executive secretary of the North Carolina FFA Alumni Association identified the teachers serving as advisors of active local alumni affiliates. The sample of teachers not serving as advisors of local alumni affiliates were selected at random from the population of teachers who teach vocational agriculture in the public secondary schools of North Carolina where an alumni affiliate is not a part of the agriculture program.

A confidential 29-item survey instrument, used to collect the research data, was a modified portion of a survey instrument used in an earlier North Carolina vocational agriculture teacher status study (Clary, 1977). It was mailed with a cover letter and a self-addressed return envelope. A follow-up letter was sent to non-respondents three weeks after the initial mailing.

Sixty-one point five percent of the instruments were returned, representing a 65 percent return from teachers who serve as advisors of local FFA alumni affiliates and a 58 percent return from teachers not having a local FFA alumni affiliate. Where feasible, data were analyzed utilizing the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation coefficient.

Findings

Local FFA alumni affiliates are designed to help vocational agriculture teachers and to support local programs. However, teachers must establish alumni affiliates before they can reap the benefits of such an organization. Several factors have been analyzed in this study to determine if any are common only to the teachers and programs having alumni affiliates.

When comparing the characteristics of the vocational agriculture programs in the sample (see Table 1), a majority of the programs having alumni affiliates were found to be larger departments, but the relationship was not significant ($r = .15$). When observing student enrollment in vocational agriculture, the number of students per teacher was found to be higher for programs with an alumni affiliate but not to a significant degree. The percentage of agriculture students who were also FFA members was significantly higher ($r = .40$) for those programs with an alumni affiliate. There was not a significant relationship between the two types of programs and the number of classes taught per day ($r = .24$) or the number of free periods per week ($r = .04$).

A positive correlation ($r = .35$) was found between type of program and the use of committees. Agriculture programs with

alumni affiliates averaged holding more than twice as many advisory committee meetings as programs without an alumni affiliate, an average of 2.35 meetings per year versus one meeting. A significant correlation ($r = .41$) was also found between the number of adult education classes taught per year and the existence of an alumni affiliate, with an average of 3.6 classes being taught in programs with an FFA alumni chapter and 1.1 classes in those without FFA alumni chapters.

Table 1

COMPARISON OF SELECTED FACTORS FOR TEACHERS AND VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS AT SCHOOLS WITH AND WITHOUT FFA ALUMNI AFFILIATES IN NORTH CAROLINA, 1979

Factors	Means for Schools With FFA Alumni Affiliates	Means for Schools Without FFA Alumni Affiliates
Number of agricultural teachers per department	2.20	1.70
Number of students enrolled in vocational agriculture classes	166.70	107.90
Percentage of students enrolled in vocational agriculture classes with membership in the FFA	94.20	73.30
Total school enrollment	937.90	897.80
Number of classes taught per day by the agriculture teacher	4.82	5.00
Number of non-class periods that agriculture teacher has per week	4.24	4.20
Number of advisory committee meetings held per year by the agriculture teacher	2.35	1.00
Number of adult education classes taught per year by the agriculture teacher	3.60	1.10

Table 2 shows a comparison of the perceptions of teachers with and without alumni affiliates regarding factors related to their positions. Based on a scale of one to five, teacher perception of administrative support was found to be slightly higher ($r = .04$, n.s.) for those teachers with an alumni chapter. Also, when examining job satisfaction, teachers advising an alumni chapter indicated a slightly higher degree of satisfaction ($r = .03$, n.s.). On a five-point scale, teachers advising alumni affiliates averaged 4.1 on teacher satisfaction, compared to 4.0 for teachers without an alumni chapter. On a three-point scale, teachers advising alumni affiliates averaged 2.9 on familiarity with FFA alumni activities, while teachers without alumni affiliates averaged 2.3.

Table 2

COMPARISON OF SELECTED FACTORS RELATING TO PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR POSITIONS FOR VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE TEACHERS AT SCHOOLS WITH AND WITHOUT FFA ALUMNI AFFILIATES

Factors	Means for Teachers at Schools With FFA Alumni Affiliates	Means for Teachers at Schools Without FFA Alumni Affiliates
Teacher perception of administrative support for the vo-ag program ¹	3.88	3.60
Teacher job satisfaction ²	4.10	4.00
Teacher familiarity with FFA alumni ³	2.90	2.30

¹Score based on response scale: 5 = "very supportive," 4 = "supportive," 3 = "average," 2 = "weak," 1 = "non-supportive."

²Score based on response scale: 5 = "highly satisfied," 4 = "satisfied," 3 = "neutral," 2 = "somewhat dissatisfied," 1 = "highly dissatisfied."

³Score based on response scale: 3 = "very familiar," 2 = "somewhat familiar," 1 = "unfamiliar."

A significant correlation ($r = .83$) was found between having a masters degree and advising a local alumni affiliate. As shown in Table 3, 76.5 percent of the teachers advising an alumni affiliate had a masters degree compared to only 13.3 percent of the teachers without an alumni. It was also found that teachers with a major in agricultural education at the undergraduate level were more inclined ($r = .44$) to have an alumni affiliate.

Table 3

COMPARISON OF EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION OF VOCATIONAL
AGRICULTURE TEACHERS SERVING AS ADVISORS OF FFA ALUMNI
AFFILIATE WITH THOSE WITHOUT AN ALUMNI AFFILIATE

Factors	Means for Teachers Serving as Advisors of FFA Alumni Affiliate	Means for Teachers Without an FFA Alumni Affiliate
Percentage of teachers with masters degree	76.5	13.3
Percentage of teachers with an undergraduate major in agricultural education	94.0	80.0
Percentage of teachers with a masters major in agricultural education	92.0	66.7

When observing factors related to professional experience (see Table 4), it is apparent that neither the number of years of teaching experience ($r = -.17$) nor the number of years taught at the same school ($r = .09$) was related to whether or not the school had an alumni affiliate. In addition, the length of employment contract was the same for all teachers in the study, that being 12 months.

Members of the sample not having an alumni affiliate as a part of their local programs were asked to identify the primary factor yielding that result. Table 5 contains a summary of the factors cited by percentage of teachers reporting. The two most frequently cited factors were insufficient time and a lack of interest on the part of the teacher.

Teachers serving as advisors of local affiliates were asked to identify the three factors they felt contributed most to the starting of their local FFA alumni affiliate. Table 6 reflects a summary of the factors cited by the percentage of teachers reporting each factor. The most frequently cited reason for starting a local affiliate was the interest of the vocational agriculture teacher.

Table 4

COMPARISON OF SELECTED FACTORS RELATING TO PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE OF VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE TEACHERS SERVING AS ADVISORS OF FFA ALUMNI AFFILIATES WITH THOSE WITHOUT AN ALUMNI AFFILIATE

Factors	Means for Teachers Serving as Advisors of FFA Alumni Affiliate	Means for Teachers Without an FFA Alumni Affiliate
Years of vocational agriculture teaching experience	11.8	13.5
Years of teaching experience at present school	9.0	10.4
Months of employment under present teaching contract	12.0	12.0

Table 5

FACTORS IDENTIFIED BY TEACHERS NOT SERVING AS FFA AFFILIATES AS ATTRIBUTING TO THERE NOT BEING AN AFFILIATE AT THEIR SCHOOL BY PERCENT OF TEACHERS REPORTING EACH FACTOR

Factors Attributed to Not Having an FFA Alumni Affiliate	Percentage of Teachers Reporting Factors
Teacher has insufficient time	54.6
Teacher lacks interest in a FFA Alumni	20.0
Teacher is a first year teacher	6.7
No factor reported	6.7
Teacher at fault	6.0
Program at fault	6.0

Table 6

FACTORS IDENTIFIED BY TEACHERS SERVING AS FFA ALUMNI AFFILIATES
AS ATTRIBUTING TO THE STARTING OF THEIR AFFILIATES
BY PERCENT OF TEACHERS REPORTING EACH FACTOR

Factors Attributed to the Starting of FFA Alumni Affiliates	Percentage of Teachers Reporting Factors
Interest of vo-ag graduates	62.0
Needed as a support group	31.0
Interest of advisor (teacher)	25.0
Interest of community members	25.0
Interest of members of other alumni affiliates	12.5
Interest created by state FFA officers	6.0
Interest of present vo-ag students	6.0
Interest of North Carolina FFA Association Executive Secretary	6.0
Needed for National Chapter Award Program	6.0
Needed for better public relations	6.0
Needed as a means of funding vo-ag program	6.0
Needed as a means of gaining administrative support for vo-ag program	6.0

Summary

To the extent that the facts obtained and the opinions expressed are accurate, and insofar as respondents are representative of the whole, the following conclusions may be drawn as of the time this study was made:

1. Teachers serving as advisors of local FFA alumni affiliates were, on the average, more likely to be involved

in conducting a greater number of adult education classes than were their counterparts at schools not having alumni affiliates.

2. Teachers at schools having alumni affiliates were, on the average, more likely to be utilizing and were meeting more often with advisory committees than were teachers at schools not having alumni affiliates.
3. All teachers, regardless of whether or not they had an alumni affiliate, were on 12-month contracts, taught essentially the same number of classes per day and had basically the same number of planning periods per week.
4. Teachers serving as advisors of alumni affiliates were more likely to have masters degrees and to have agriculture education majors than teachers not serving as advisors to alumni affiliates.

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