

## IDENTITY IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

by

J. C. Atherton  
Louisiana State University

*Journal of the American Association of  
Teacher Educators in Agriculture*  
Volume 10, Number 1, pp.20-22  
DOI: 10.5032/jaatea.1969.01020

The years 1917, 1963 and 1968 are considered major milestones in the history of vocational agricultural education and its service to the American public. During each of these years the Congress passed legislation of tremendous significance to persons making a living through employment in agriculture. Each Act has imposed a responsibility upon and a challenge to the educator.

The agricultural educator can view with pride accomplishments since the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act. At no time has there been a severe shortage of food in this nation although the population has increased enormously while the percentage of persons actually farming has been reduced significantly. (One should hasten to say that many other agencies have played a part also in keeping agricultural production at a high level.)

Agricultural educators have been in the forefront with some of their teaching methods. Several notable examples of these include:

1. Use of the project method in teaching
2. Providing individualized training programs for each student
3. Fitting the program to community needs
4. Involving the community in the educational venture through use of advisory groups
5. Full time student teaching out in a school community.

These and other achievements are part of the rich heritage which vocational agriculture possesses. The program has not failed. It met the original challenge and faced up to its responsibilities in a commendable manner. There are some who view with alarm, however, the current apparent tremendous and rapid decline of accomplishment and influence of our profession. Furthermore, at times the more optimistic educators express concern over the inertia in the profession and the seemingly ineffectiveness of their efforts.

Sociological change, technological progress and poverty or need in the midst of affluence combine to present a formidable challenge to those concerned with educational programs in agriculture. It seems that at times only a piecemeal approach is being made to the problem of keeping current and providing viable, dynamic, challenging, and useful training for teachers so that they will be equipped adequately to accomplish the task that is before them. Fragmentation of the vocational service divisions with the U. S. Office of Education has succeeded in depriving the teacher educators of needed guidance and national stability at a period when assistance is sorely needed. Federal funding of research and service projects and activities conducted at the National Center stress the homogenization of services. The uniqueness of vocational agricultural education (and let me stress that it has a personality all of its own) seems forgotten or ignored by those in high places.

The problems are further complicated by the narrowsightedness of some of our colleagues in general education and a portion of the lay public who have not visualized the scope of agricultural employment nor do they see the value of a well rounded educational program in agriculture. Far from the last of our headaches is the apathetic or fossilized agricultural educator who reverences the past, resists change, and, like the famed "Woofus bird", is continually looking backward to the past.

Although the situation has a dark side it is far from being hopeless. There are signs of promise that vocational agricultural education can and will make adjustments that are needed and that enhance the prestige and service rendered to the public and to the entire educational system.

The 1963 Act gave added dimensions and responsibilities to the program and much effort has been dedicated to implementation. These adjustments are just now getting into "high gear", but even further modification is called for. The 1968 Amendments are still in the process of interpretation and the ultimate effect upon agricultural educators can not be foreseen. It is obvious, however, that much innovation will be required. Someone has said that vocational agriculture has been at the crossroads for the past 50 years. There have always been problems and this shall continue. So far we have managed to remain on the road and with ingenuity and initiative we should be able to forge ahead and stay abreast with current needs.

Vocational educators have had their periods of seeming prosperity and decline before. Each set of new challenges has brought forth its doubters and those who made dire predictions about the doom of agriculture and education centered in this area. But when the chips were down, the program has emerged victorious with the needed adjustments to keep the work viable.

It seems that to lead the profession successfully through the maze of problems currently present, teacher educators must have certain convictions. One of these is that change is needed; another is that for the foreseeable future continual adjustments are desirable in order that current and projected needs are cared for adequately. The tragedy of the present is that many subscribe to this verbally, but fail to become involved on a practical level.

Teacher educators have the privilege of meeting their responsibility to a large segment of American society and bringing forth the methods which will care for the needs of this group. Possibly the opportunities are greatest at this time in history--a period of great change. The task must be faced honestly and boldly with a full acceptance of the obligations it imposes.

Some say we should forget entirely our heritage and submerge all the distinct elements of vocational agricultural education. The contention is that our program should be shared with our neighbors and that in reality there is only one program--job training for all, though it has many facets. On the surface this sounds good. It promises a unified approach to all problems in the various fields of vocational education. One narrow teacher

education program would suffice for the training of all vocational teachers. All problems are placed together and wrapped in one neat packet. A person trained in any of the vocational disciplines would be able to teach adequately subject matter in all areas of employment. Its a beautiful pipedream, BUT IT WON'T WORK.

There are areas of commonality which embrace all the various services as well as some elements which are applicable to two or more of the fields of vocational education. These may be taught well by persons with various backgrounds and training. But the day agriculture is removed from a specific slot in the curriculum and is submerged into one conglomerate vocational effort the effectiveness of the agricultural instruction is largely dissipated, and the learner is the loser.

-----

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF TEACHER EDUCATORS IN AGRICULTURE

(Make checks payable to AATEA)

1969 Dues: \$4.00

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Institution \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Send dues to: George L. Luster, Treasurer, AATEA, 151 Taylor Education Building, Department of Vocational Education, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky 40506

-----

\* \* \* \* \*

THE TASK OF QUANTIFYING AGRICULTURAL OCCUPATIONS

by

Theodore Buila  
Southern Illinois University

One of the fundamental purposes of occupational studies in the area of agricultural manpower has been to identify the labor pool parameters which agricultural education can serve. These studies are attempting to provide empirical documentation to facilitate more judicious educational programming decisions.