

USE OF RESOURCE INFORMATION BY TEACHER EDUCATORS  
IN AGRICULTURE

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"Teacher education has been called the heart of the educational program."<sup>1</sup> This may be partially because teacher educators serve key roles in communicating information, both through pre-service and in-service instruction. Teacher educators must keep abreast of new information because "teacher education programs continue to change. The major changes...include internships, certification in a specific taxonomy of agriculture, pass-fail marks for student teaching, coordination of work experience with industry, more flexibility in certification requirements and more clinical experience prior to student teaching."<sup>2</sup> In addition, teachers should now receive preparation so they may assist other teachers in applying the concepts of career education. These changes in both the methodology and substance of teacher education practice emphasize the importance of keeping informed concerning new developments and utilizing new knowledge to update and improve instruction.

A recent research study identified the major information sources utilized by teacher educators in vocational and technical education in seven states.<sup>3</sup> Criteria for selecting various information sources were also examined. Twenty-five percent of the 117 teacher educator respondents in the study were teacher educators in agriculture. The typical respondent could be described as 47 years of age with 11 years experience in teacher education. He had a doctoral degree and college teaching was his primary job function.

Teacher educators were found to generally conduct their own searches for information and resource materials. They sought information to resolve problems, scanned new publications for self development, and conducted searches for specific purposes such as course development or proposal development. Research information was typically used as background information, in examining alternatives, and in developing solutions.

Local libraries, professional associations, and college departments were the agencies most heavily utilized as information sources by teacher educators. Literature sources utilized to the greatest extent were journals and periodicals, conference and research reports, indexes, and curriculum and teaching guides.

Summaries and interpretations of research were utilized to a greater extent than were original reports. In fact, the technical quality of research reports was negatively associated with frequency of utilization. Many materials perceived to be high in technical quality were also perceived as difficult to obtain and/or use. Accessibility, familiarity, and ease of use were positively associated with frequency of utilization.

Personal information sources were utilized with greater frequency than sources of literature. Personal information sources used most frequently were fellow workers, recognized experts or authorities on a subject, and colleagues in other organizations.

This study and others conducted by The Center for Vocational and Technical Education resulted in guidelines for improving information utilization by teacher educators.<sup>4</sup> These guidelines were reviewed by a jury of teacher educators and researchers. They are summarized below:

1. Information resources should be readily available and easily used;
2. Teacher educators should have access to an information center providing both browsing and retrospective search capability;
3. Communications should be prepared explaining what information services are available from each information agency;
4. Information services should be available in the local library and in the department if possible;
5. Teacher educators should be provided with summarized, synthesized or evaluated information;
6. Instruction and assistance should be given in searching indexes and bibliographies;
7. Training should be provided teacher educators in the use of ERIC and other information dissemination systems;
8. In-service and graduate education courses should utilize instruction on educational information dissemination systems;
9. Organizations, through their formal and informal structure, should provide a means of sharing information; and

10. Information to be disseminated need not be perceived as high in technical quality, but must be relevant, current, brief, easily identified, authentic, comprehensive, and capable of being obtained quickly.

Teacher educators are not only being challenged to keep themselves informed of new developments but also to develop in students the abilities needed to conduct and utilize research. "From the beginning of his career, a professional teacher must be equipped to identify critical problem areas of teaching in order to be able to ferret out and interpret the literature of previous discoveries, arrange the isolated fragments into a meaningful design, and conduct research plans that may result in tentative solutions."<sup>5</sup> An ERIC Instructional Package for Vocational Educators<sup>6</sup> is now available and may be utilized by teacher educators in courses designed to acquaint students with this important resource.

Teacher educators in agriculture have a responsibility to utilize the resources available in improving and updating the substance and methodology of teacher education. They also should instruct their students in how to find and use research. Effective resource utilization will become a reality as information services for teacher educators are improved.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Earl T. Carpenter and John H. Rodgers. Review and Synthesis of Research in Agricultural Education. Columbus: The Ohio State University, ERIC Clearinghouse on Vocational and Technical Education, June, 1970. p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Leon W. Boucher. "The Status of Teacher Education Programs in Agriculture." The Journal of the American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture. Vol. 13, No. 1. March, 1972. p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>John David McCracken. "The Utilization of Information by State Supervisory and Teacher Education Personnel in Vocational and Technical Education." Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation. Columbus: The Ohio State University, 1970.

<sup>4</sup>J. David McCracken and Wilma B. Gillespie. Information Utilization by Vocational Educators. Columbus: The Ohio State University, The Center for Vocational and Technical Education, 1973.

<sup>5</sup>Merle B. Marks. "Research: The Pre-Service Missing Link," Journal of Teacher Education, Vol. 23, No. 4, Winter, 1972. p. 453.

<sup>6</sup>David H. Miller and Gary F. Beasley. ERIC Instructional Package for Vocational Educators. Columbus: The Ohio State University, ERIC Clearinghouse on Vocational and Technical Education. 1973.