

**FLEXIBILITY WITH STABILITY --  
Theme of Kentucky's Revised Curriculum**

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With the advent of new and special programs in vocational agriculture it is necessary that different teacher competencies be developed from those which have been adequate to conduct good programs. For teachers presently on the job in Kentucky, these new competencies have been developed through individual study and group workshops or in-service training of some other nature. Such in-service programs have been highly effective in building enthusiasm and getting new and special types of programs started.

However, to continue to depend on in-service training to prepare teachers for special programs seems impractical. This is especially true for those who experienced general agriculture courses in the pre-service program. Therefore, we worked to revise the undergraduate curriculum to provide for flexibility and specialization, without relinquishing stability and a guarantee of good training in basic technical agriculture.

In the previous program there was no opportunity for a person who planned to be a teacher to specialize. During the first two years, students met the basic agricultural requirements by taking five courses from at least four of the following areas: 1) agricultural economics, 2) agronomy, 3) animal science, 4) agricultural engineering, entomology or pathology, and 5) horticulture or forestry. During the last two years there were no unrestricted electives unless the student chose to take student teaching, and the related courses in agricultural education, as a graduate student. This meant a four and one-half year program.

Such stringent requirements and lack of freedom were justified since all teachers of agriculture needed to be competent in all of the basic areas of agriculture. This was predicated on the idea that teachers of agriculture must be all things to all people. Most teachers were in a single-teacher department and conducted high-school and adult- or young-farmer classes. Their students were engaged in or preparing for general or highly diversified farming. Therefore, the requirements that all have fundamentals of general farming seemed important.

Contrast this with the present situation. Over two-thirds of the teachers in Kentucky are employed in multiple-teacher departments. Farming has become specialized. The number of enterprises per farm has greatly decreased, while the use of services from agribusiness has greatly increased. Special programs in horticulture, agribusiness, and agricultural mechanics are now being offered rather widely, and requests for them continue. The ability to meet these requests depends upon the availability of teachers having the needed interests and capabilities.

Thus, it is easy to see that at least some of our teachers need to be prepared to work in specialized situations. They need greater depth in the different areas of their responsibility than was possible with the general agriculture program. It has been determined that many schools in Kentucky should have special programs in horticulture, agribusiness, and agricultural engineering. A new program of teacher preparation was necessary to meet these needs.

Such a new program for teachers of agriculture seemed to fit well with recent changes in the over-all curriculum at the University of Kentucky. All students who enter the University enroll in the College of Arts and Sciences for the first two years to complete their general studies component. Students select certain options (usually one to three courses from a larger list) to fulfill their general component. If they plan a major in agriculture, they must select options from these four areas: 1) mathematics, 2) physical sciences, 3) biological sciences, and 4) social sciences. In addition students select one option, their fifth, from one of the following: 1) foreign language, 2) humanities, 3) history, or 4) behavioral sciences. This general studies component is a combination of specific required courses and those selected by the student.

When the student attains junior classification, he enrolls in the College of Agriculture. By this time, most students have completed three core courses in agriculture (social science, plant science, and animal science) plus their general studies component. If any of these core courses have not been taken, the student will take them during his first year in the College of Agriculture.

In the junior year the student will select a major and begin the requirements for his professional component. One of these majors is in agricultural education in which students select courses in specified areas of genetics, agricultural engineering, plant science, animal science, and agricultural economics (including rural sociology). Even though some courses and areas are specified, the student has room for nine hours of electives in agriculture. These may all be taken in a single area, where he possibly already has taken required courses, or they may be spread over new areas. This provides limited flexibility leading toward specialization.

Students may also qualify to teach vocational agriculture by completing any major in the College of Agriculture which requires a minimum of 48 hours in technical agriculture. This means that students can become teachers of agriculture by selecting any of several departmental majors in various areas of agriculture (horticulture, agricultural engineering, animal science, soils, and the like) and by successfully completing student teaching, and related courses in agricultural education. Student teaching and the related courses to become a teacher consist of 18 semester hours (one full semester of study) in the Department of Agricultural Education in the College of Education. This plan can be completed in four years of study.

This program enables students to specialize in any one of many areas in agriculture and also become a teacher of agriculture. Not only do they have this option, but some will be encouraged to follow this route. Students may also take the more general agricultural education option of selected courses in technical agriculture, if they desire. This too has been made more flexible. This flexible program opens many options in agriculture for the prospective teacher. Students may or may not specialize, as they choose. In either case there are safeguards built in to guarantee excellent preparation in technical agriculture and in professional education. Thus, the stability. Flexibility is necessary, we believe, to prepare teachers who are able to provide the many kinds of new and specialized local programs that are needed in vocational agriculture today.

Although this specialization raises some doubt about being able to make proper placement, we do not anticipate this as a problem. School administrators have already begun to request men with special qualifications. Undoubtedly, teachers having special preparation will seek out locations where their competencies will be a definite asset.

We think this flexibility in the program to prepare teachers will broaden the market for our product. In past years, we have witnessed the disappearance of vocational agriculture from counties because a general practitioner was attempting to operate where a specialist was needed. Potentially good teachers have failed because they were teaching general farming (as they were prepared to do) where a special program was needed. However, more important than the increased market for teachers, we believe this will help strengthen the total program of agricultural education.