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FOR MORE EFFECTIVE TEACHER EDUCATION: USE A COMPETENCY-BASED PLAN FOR THE SUMMER EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

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Teachers of agriculture have been recognized over the years for their ability to conduct programs to prepare young men and women for employment. Teacher educators desire to maintain a flow of highly competent teachers into the profession. Teacher education programs are being modified and new approaches examined in preparing beginning agriculture teachers. In a quest to maintain excellence in teaching and quality programs, educators must seek answers to such questions as these. What is the most perfected manner to

prepare teachers? What are the tasks of teachers of agriculture? What competencies should be possessed by beginning teachers? What activities and experiences will best develop these competencies?

A study recently completed at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has implication to these and other questions. The study was designed to measure the change that took place in the student teacher's ability to perform selected competencies as perceived by both the student teachers enrolled in a summer experience program in agricultural education and their cooperating teachers.[1]

Procedure

The study involved sixteen agriculture student teachers enrolled in an experience program during the summer of 1972, and eleven cooperating teachers. Based on the objectives for the summer experience program, a list of 71 competency statements was compiled for use as the data-collecting instruments. Two scales were developed for the 71 competency statements. One scale yielded a confidence measure of the student teachers' perceived ability to perform each competency. The instrument was administered to the student teachers as a pretest prior to the experience program and as a posttest immediately following the experience program. The cooperating teachers were asked to rate the student teachers' ability to perform each competency following the experience program. The other scale was used to obtain an importance rating prior to the summer experience program. The cooperating teachers were asked to rate the importance of each competency as needed by a beginning agriculture teacher.

For purposes of testing three general hypotheses and presenting the findings, each hypothesis included twelve subhypotheses that paralled the twelve course objectives for the summer experience program and their respective contributing teacher competencies. The t-test and the Pearson product moment coefficient of correlation were used to analyze the data.

Findings

There were 69 teacher competencies that had higher posttest mean scores than pretest mean scores indicating a positive change in the student teachers' perceived ability to perform selected com-

petencies deemed necessary for beginning teachers of agricultural occupations. The progress was significant at the .10 or greater level for 25 competencies. Significant changes in the student teachers' perceived ability to perform competencies were found in areas pertaining to helping and assisting with FFA activities, working with students concerning their supervised experience programs, working with adult programs, working with advisory councils, and becoming acquainted with related agencies in agricultural education.

There were six teacher competencies that had correlation coefficients significant at the .10 or greater level pertaining to the student teachers' ability to perform the selected competencies as rated by both the cooperating teachers and student teachers following the experience program. Agreement between the two groups was found for the student teachers' ability to participate in school and community activities and to communicate with people in the school and community.

There were ten correlation coefficients which were significant at the .10 or greater level pertaining to the importance ratings by the cooperating teachers and the ratings from the student teachers concerning their perceived ability to perform the competencies. This situation was found for areas pertaining to assisting students in experiences concerning non-farm jobs requiring knowledge and skills in agriculture, working with advisory councils and adult programs, and participating in school and community activities.

Implications

The findings of this study have implications for pre-service teacher education program planning in agriculture education. The findings should be especially helpful for the development of training plans for student teachers participating in a summer experience program.

Planning the summer experience program. The student teacher, the cooperating teacher, and the university supervisor should be involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating the summer experience program.

At a workshop prior to the summer experience program, involving the student teachers, the cooperating teachers, and the university supervisors, a list of teacher competencies should be developed and evaluated for use as a training guide for the summer experience program. During this time the university supervisors should stress the teacher competencies considered to be the most important in the profession. The cooperating teachers should respond to the competencies as to how important they feel each competency is to a beginning teacher of agriculture. The student teachers should be asked to respond to the competencies to identify the areas where they need the most help and experience. Student teachers who indicate a need to become more proficient in certain areas should be placed in schools where the cooperating teachers place a high priority on the competencies in these areas.

Training plan for summer experience. A personalized training plan utilizing the competency-based approach to instruction would give everyone involved an opportunity to evaluate the progress of the student teacher at any time during the summer experience program. This approach to instruction would permit the student teacher, the cooperating teacher, and the university supervisor to identify areas where the student teacher needs additional experience.

The progress made by student teachers in performing various competencies during the summer experience program should be used to determine the course objectives and experiences for other professional courses in the pre-service agriculture teacher training curriculum.

The development of a competency-based training plan for each individual student teacher should be based on his needs and the needs of the agricultural education profession.

REFERENCES

[1]Trotter, Eugene E. "A Study of Selected Competencies Performed by Agricultural Occupations Student Teachers During a Summer Experience Program." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, 1973.