

THE NEW LOOK IN VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE *

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The rapid advancement in science, technology, mechanization, and production techniques has had a tremendous impact on farming and other phases of agriculture in recent years. These facts which are well known to workers in agricultural education, have important implications for changes in vocational agriculture. There is general agreement that programs of instruction must keep pace with the times if they are to continue to adequately serve agricultural workers in a dynamic economy.

During the 1961 Pacific Regional Conference for Supervisors and Teacher Trainers in Agricultural Education, a committee devoted several days to a study of trends and needs in the various states as a basis for revision of objectives. The work consisted of revision and clarification of objectives for three types of vocational classes and the development of a list of eight objectives for general agriculture.

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OBJECTIVES OF INSTRUCTION IN AGRICULTURE

Types of Programs

- Vocational Agriculture
 - A. High School Students
 - B. Out-of-school Groups
- Adults
 - Young Farmers
- General Agriculture (non-reimbursed)

Objectives of Vocational Agriculture in High School

Primary Purpose:

To help prepare youth for farming and for agricultural occupations which require competence in farming.

Secondary Purposes:

1. To help youth make decisions concerning the choice of an agricultural career.
2. To help prepare certain pupils for post high school education in agriculture.
3. To contribute effectively to the general educational objectives of the secondary school.

Objectives:

To develop in students the understandings, abilities, and attitudes needed to:

1. Make a beginning and advance in farming or in an agricultural occupation which requires competence in farming.
2. Apply the principles of science, management, economics, and mechanics to the efficient production and marketing of farm products.
3. Make decisions concerning the choice of an agricultural career.
4. Plan and prepare for post high school education in agriculture.
5. Maintain a favorable home environment.
6. Appreciate the importance of agriculture to our national welfare.
7. Manage and use wisely, soil, water, and other natural resources.
8. Participate effectively in school and community affairs.

Objectives of Out-of-School Vocational Agriculture

Young Farmers

The primary purpose of young farmers' instruction is to assist young adults in becoming established in farming or in an occupation which requires competence in farming.

Objectives:

To develop in students the understandings, abilities, and attitudes needed to:

1. Make a beginning and advance in farming or in an occupation which requires competence in agriculture.

2. Apply the principles of science, management, economics, and mechanics to the efficient production and marketing of farm products.
3. Make decisions concerning the choice of an agricultural occupation.
4. Plan and prepare for further education in agriculture.
5. Maintain a favorable home environment.
6. Appreciate the importance of agriculture to our national welfare and to aid in the formulation of policy that may affect agriculture.
7. Manage and use wisely, soil, water, and other natural resources.
8. Participate effectively in social, civic, and economic affairs.

Adults

Primary Purpose:

To increase the proficiency of those engaged in farming or in an occupation which requires competence in farming.

Objectives:

To develop in students the understandings, abilities, and attitudes needed to:

1. Apply the principles of science, management, economics, and mechanics to the efficient production and marketing of farm products.
2. Make decisions concerning the continuation of an agricultural occupation.
3. Plan and prepare for further education in agriculture.
4. Maintain a favorable home environment.
5. Appreciate the importance of agriculture to our national welfare and to aid in the formulation of policy that may affect agriculture.
6. Manage and use wisely, soil, water, and other natural resources.
7. Participate effectively in social, civic, and economic affairs.

Objectives of General Agriculture

The primary purpose of general agriculture is to develop in youth, as future citizens and consumers, an appreciation and understanding of agriculture.

Objectives:

To develop in students appreciation and understanding of:

1. The social and economic importance of agriculture.
2. The interdependence of urban and rural people.
3. The background and significance of agriculture in relation to national welfare and the individual responsibility for policy making.
4. The development of some basic abilities relative to plant and animal life with special reference to maintaining a favorable home environment.
5. The importance of and basic practices for conservation of natural resources.
6. Agriculture as an applied science in relation to the application of technology to economic production.
7. Career opportunities in agriculture and in occupations requiring competence in agriculture.
8. Understanding world agriculture in relation to production and consumption of agricultural products.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES IN OBJECTIVES

The foregoing objectives give recognition to a wide variety of content, and expansion of programs to meet the needs of non-vocational students. There are also implications for more science principles and basic course content for those who enter jobs directly from high school and especially the increasing number who will pursue further education in agriculture. The problem of assisting the student in making decisions concerning an occupation in agriculture is clearly stated. This will call for additional units of instruction at both beginning and advanced levels, increased individual counseling, and supervision, and expansion of occupational experiences for all students. Another important item among the revised objectives is the development of understanding and appreciation of the importance of agriculture to our national welfare. This is a major objective for courses in general agriculture and should also receive much emphasis in the content for vocational classes.

These new objectives should assist teachers and school officials in using the strong foundation of vocational agriculture to improve and expand services that will reflect the values, understandings, and competencies demanded of those responsible for our food and fiber needs in the present decade.

The first step toward the attainment of the foregoing objectives should include a clear statement of the major problem areas or changes needed and some suggested procedures by which these may be accomplished. Since the scope of this report does not permit a complete list, I suggest the following for consideration. Each of you will add others in accordance with local situations, your own background, and philosophy.

SOME PROGRAM CHANGES FOR CONSIDERATION

- I. The development of a more thorough understanding on the part of the public, counselors, and other educators concerning the nature and importance of agriculture to individual and national welfare. This is a long-range undertaking but demands immediate attention since much of the progress on the revised objectives will depend upon results in presenting to the public a more accurate picture of agriculture. The following activities should be helpful:
 - A. Develop additional classes in agriculture.
 - B. Broaden the instruction in all agriculture classes to include information about occupations in agriculture other than farming.
 - C. Use mass media wherever possible to inform the public about agriculture and vocational opportunities available in this field.
 - D. Inform more people about the objectives, activities, and results of vocational agriculture:
 1. Develop, publish, and distribute long-range department programs of work.
 2. Make use of advisory councils.
 3. Conduct follow-up studies of graduates and use the data in promotional work.
 4. Conduct organized public relations activities as a regular part of department programs.
 5. Provide high school counselors with further information on the program of vocational agriculture and placement opportunities in the broad field of agriculture.
 6. Develop effective working relationships with high school counselors at both state and local levels.

II. The expansion of instruction and modification of courses to meet the educational needs of more people.

- A. Survey prospective students at all age and grade levels concerning interest in any phase of agriculture.
- B. Develop new types of instructional programs in accordance with needs. The following is a list of groups to be served:
 - 1. Full-time farmers and ranchers, those who have selected this field as a vocation and want instruction in this area.
 - 2. Part-time farmers, those who will follow other vocations but will earn some portion of their living from farming.
 - 3. Owners of farm property, usually as absentee ownership with varying degrees of responsibility for a farm business.
 - 4. Workers in agricultural occupations other than farming. These jobs vary widely, from those closely integrated with actual farming to others only remotely related.
 - 5. Business and professional workers who will come into close contact with farm people, their leaders and the agricultural industry in general.
 - 6. Boys (and girls) who live on the farm, but plan to follow other vocations as adults. For this group, general agriculture can offer guidance, laboratory experiences, increased earning ability while on the farm, and enrichment of their total educational program.
- C. Modify content of present courses to meet the needs of special groups, such as:
 - 1. Semi-skilled workers on farms and related jobs.
 - 2. Those especially interested in agriculture as a science.
 - 3. Those who desire a general knowledge of agriculture mainly at the appreciation level.
- D. Revise course content to include comprehensive units with more emphasis on scientific principles and their application to agriculture.
- E. Offer general agriculture classes to meet the need of groups listed under C, 3 above. This work should be most effective in schools with a large potential enrollment in the 9th grade.
- F. Add vocational agriculture to high schools not offering the program at present.
 - 1. Supply information to school officials and patrons on the educational outcomes of programs in neighboring communities.
 - 2. Help develop tailor-made programs of instruction to meet local needs.

III. Provision for a broader range of farm experience for students as a part of vocational agriculture.

- A. Solicit assistance of the advisory committee on this problem of locating suitable farming programs or other vocational experience for students.
- B. Survey the community and outlying areas for all types of potential situations for farm and ranch experience. Give major consideration to jobs that will:
 - 1. Aid the student in determining a goal, concerning a career in agriculture.
 - 2. Provide skills, background, understanding, and appreciation appropriate to the vocational objective.
- C. Make use of certain types of specialized experiences in farming if they are consistent with items 1 and 2 above.
- D. Explore the possibilities of group projects for beginning students as a supplement to other farm experiences. Use the following standards as a basis for selection and approval of group projects and off-farm employment:

1. It should provide broad experience in skills and understanding in farming.
 2. It should involve basic practices in the production of an agricultural product.
- E. Make more extensive use of farm placement especially for advanced students and as a supplement to other types of vocational experience. This work should involve approved program plans, records, and supervision by the teacher.
- F. Explore the possibilities of improvement projects and supplementary jobs especially those relating to the objective of improvement of home environment.
- G. Develop written department standards for all types of vocational experience and have them published for student use.
- H. Develop and equip land laboratories to meet specific educational needs of students. These should supplement but not replace other types of learning experience on the job. The following are some guides for efficient use of such facilities:
1. Educational use should be the sole criterion for procuring land, buildings and equipment for such projects. These should not be show places, involve controlled experiments, nor be expected to show a profit.
 2. The overhead expense should be a regular part of the school budget.
 3. The laboratory should be limited in scope, possibly 8 to 10 acres, or less in some cases.
 4. It should provide facilities for a broad range of experiences with preference given to short-term projects involving many students in both cooperative and individual responsibility.
 5. Provision should be made to hire farm workers as needed to avoid undue infringement on the professional time of the teacher.
 6. Every enterprise and project on the land laboratory should be developed as a teaching-learning situation involving planning, records, analysis and evaluation of results.

As an introduction to the new look, I have suggested three major areas for change and a number of steps for bringing these to fruition. Very few of these are really new, since the sturdy foundation of vocational agriculture which has stood the test of time needs little change, but the superstructure should be altered to cope with problems of the sixties. Through a dynamic program of imagination, experimentation and evaluation, agricultural education should continue the movement toward new levels of productiveness and service.