

KEEPING AHEAD IN TEACHER EDUCATION

EXTENSION TRAINING IN A DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

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Participation in agricultural extension as a part of the pre-service training program has proven to be a valuable development in Agricultural Education at The Ohio State University. Prospective teachers of vocational agriculture are more effectively trained, and prospective extension personnel are better prepared as a result of this program. Likewise, students preparing for positions in agricultural business or mission work are better prepared by their experience in both areas.

This relatively new program, begun in 1955, consists primarily of replacing one-half quarter of student teaching with a similar program of field experience in extension in selected counties during the senior year. The experiences are in addition to those provided in a quarter of student teaching during the junior year, which is a prerequisite to this program.

While engaged in the extension program, apprentice trainees assist in planning and conducting all phases of the work. They become acquainted with the pertinent information, resources, and the organization of the program for adults as well as youth. Special emphasis is given to the various methods of teaching, particularly mass media, individual conferences and supervision, and supervisory work with lay committees. One of the outstanding features of this experience is the understanding that is developed concerning the program of other agencies, particularly the Soil Conservation Service, Agricultural Stabilization Committee, Farmers' Home Administration, Production Credit Association, Farm Bureau, and the Grange. Trainees accompany and observe the work of such persons as the dairy tester and artificial inseminator. An effort is made to provide all of these experiences on an individual-need basis.

The apprentice teaching program, as this is known, is elective and flexible. Possibilities open to students include spending full time in extension, full time in vocational agriculture, or selected periods of time with either or both; or, with the approval of his adviser, a student may elect academic courses rather than this kind of participation if such is judged to be more valuable to him. With these possibilities, it is interesting to note that approximately 80 per cent of the students elect apprentice teaching with time divided equally between agricultural extension and vocational agriculture.

The extension phase of the program is supervised by a staff member in Agricultural Education supported from University funds. He works with the cooperating agents who meet quarterly with cooperating teachers in vocational agriculture to plan and evaluate the program. The training center counties are selected on the basis of the quality of the extension programs and the competency of the extension agents and their interest in providing a challenging field experience program for students.

In addition to apprentice teaching responsibilities, the extension staff member teaches an undergraduate course, "Principles in Extension Program Development," and is the coordinator of a graduate workshop on "Program Planning in Agricultural Extension." He has also cooperated with the remainder of the staff in Agricultural Education in conducting a special workshop on communication in Agricultural Education in which both teachers and agents participated. Since that workshop was held, the School of Journalism has provided a special section of one course, with emphasis upon writing, especially designed for teachers and agents.

Another cooperative venture is an off-campus graduate credit seminar on "Marketing of Grain and Livestock." The Extension Service has provided specialists who serve as resource persons. The additional enrollment, resources, and services provided through the inclusion of agricultural extension in the development of Agricultural Education programs makes a broader program for both groups.

This development in Agricultural Education was prompted by the need of the University to provide some professional pre-service and in-service training for extension personnel. A committee (including the chairman of the Department of Agricultural Education), appointed by the Dean of the College of Agriculture to make a thorough-going study, proposed the program as it has been conducted. The analysis which included a study of programs throughout the country pointed to the

conclusion that a separate department or agency in the University was not necessary to prepare Agricultural Extension personnel. Basically, Agricultural Extension is an educational program, and the Department of Agricultural Education should have purposes and programs broader than the preparation of teachers of vocational agriculture. The Department of Agricultural Education was conceived as the most logical division of a university for the professional preparation of Agricultural Extension personnel. It was, likewise, concluded that vocational agriculture would gain from such a procedure in terms of a more effective training program. The writer is convinced that the experience to date has substantiated this point of view. Likewise, the operating procedures have been sound.