

Attitudes of Ohio Vocational Agriculture Teachers Toward Summer Programs

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Due to the seasonal nature of agriculture, many of the experiences needed by vocational agriculture students have occurred during the summer months. For this reason, the contract of the vocational agriculture teacher has been longer than the typical nine-month academic school year. Students gain experience during the summer which could not be gained at other times of the year (Miller & Parks, 1981). Ohio standards have varied the required amount of extended service from 1 to 12 weeks depending upon the taxonomy area.

Numerous authors (Miller & Moss, 1980; Lee, 1980) have noted the desirability and necessity for high quality summer programs. Richardson (1982) pointed out that the quality of the summer program rested with the teacher. With the quality of the program resting on the teacher, then teacher attitudes are important. An attitude is a predisposition to behave in a certain manner (Kerlinger, 1973). Attitudes toward summer programs, then, would provide a window through which to view the potential behavior of teachers.

Williams (1981), Cepica (1977) and Hilton (1979) have reported the importance of the summer program to a high quality vocational agriculture program. Luft (1976) had identified appropriate summer activities which helped form the dimensions of the attitude domain. Once attitudes were determined, they might be explained more fully by selected characteristics of the program or teachers. Appropriate characteristics were identified from the work of Arrington and McCracken (1981) and Robinson (1976).

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to determine the attitudes of vocational agriculture instructors toward summer programs so that policy makers and administrators would know the opinions of those affected by the standards. If variability in attitudes existed within the group, then could the variability be explained by characteristics of the program or teacher?

The objectives of this study were:

1. To determine the attitudes of Ohio vocational agriculture teachers toward summer programs; and
2. To determine any differences or relationships existing between these attitudes and: (a) length of extended service; (b) taxonomy area; (c) years of experience teaching vocational agriculture; (d) educational level of the teachers; (e) additional summer employment other than teaching; and (f) teacher perceptions of the attitudes of their administrators toward summer programs.

Procedures

This was descriptive survey research. The target population was 1983-84 Ohio vocational agriculture teachers (N=730). A stratified, by taxonomy area, proportionate 26% random sample (n=190) was drawn (Cochran, 1977) to produce 95% confidence with a 5% margin of error; thus, sampling error was controlled. Frame and selection errors were controlled by utilizing an accurate, up-to-date list of teachers from which the random sample was drawn.

A researcher-developed questionnaire was utilized for data collection. Content validity was established by a panel of experts and internal consistence reliability was .82 with Cronbach's alpha procedure. Forty-five items comprised the instrument scaled with a four point Likert-type scale with points of strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4).

Two mailings were utilized with the second as a follow-up. An OSU pencil was used as an incentive. Non-response bias was controlled by comparing late to early respondents (Miller & Smith, 1983) on all variables, and a t-test revealed no significant differences between respondents and non-respondents. The data sample was comprised of 158 (83%) respondents.

Data were described with frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Analyses were conducted with correlations, t-tests, ANOVA, and LSD, with an a priori alpha level of .05.

Results

A study of this nature could benefit state and local supervisors of agricultural education by revealing teacher characteristics which are correlated with positive attitudes toward summer programs. This would enable supervisors to help teachers improve the effectiveness of their summer programs. In improving summer program effectiveness, vocational agriculture teachers stand to benefit in that they would have a better case for justifying the continuation of extended service contracts in the future.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Ohio vocational agriculture teachers had positive attitudes toward summer programs. Administrators, supervisors and teacher educators should continue to encourage this outlook.
2. Ohio teachers perceived their local administrators had positive attitudes toward summer programs. The image the administrators are conveying should be communicated to them.
3. A significant correlation was found between teachers' attitudes and their perception of administrators' attitudes. While significant and positive, this correlation was not of high magnitude. The two measures varied together but not enough to help in prediction of one based on the other ($r^2=.07$) as 93% of the variability in one is unaccounted for by knowledge of the other.
4. Teachers had positive attitudes regardless of length of their contract. They perceive positively the activities listed and should be permitted to perform them and be provided time to do so. Although significant, the correlation was not of high magnitude.

5. "Number of years taught" and "other summer employment" did not help predict attitudes. Attitudes were positive across groups. "Lack of experience" or "other employment" were not detrimental as might have been hypothesized. A negative correlation was produced between attitude and number of hours worked in an additional job. This implies that more hours worked produced lower attitudes. This relationship should be investigated further in future studies. The magnitude of the correlation was not high.

6. Teachers in certain taxonomy areas had significantly lower attitudes than other areas. Policies and programs should seek to remediate this finding.

The results of Cepica (1977), Hilton (1979) and Williams (1981) regarding teachers' attitudes are supported by this study. Hilton (1979) related that teachers and administrators perceived summer activities as important, and this study replicates this conclusion. The study contradicts Robinson (1976) who found a significant positive correlation between length of extended service contract and attitudes toward summer programs.

The results are generalizable to Ohio; but, to more fully describe teachers of vocational agriculture, it should be replicated in other states. A longitudinal, panel or cohort study could determine any changes in attitude over time.

Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviation and Rank of Teachers' Responses by Statement

Rank	Statement	<u>Mean</u> <u>S.D.</u>
1	A teacher should provide individualized instruction and supervision of student SOEP's during the summer.	<u>3.62</u> <u>.60</u>
2	A teacher should visit each prospective student during the summer to discuss the vocational agriculture program.	<u>3.58</u> <u>.54</u>
3	Technical Inservice workshops like "Technical Update" or those provided by other teachers or the Cooperative Extension service are worthwhile activities for a teacher to attend in the summer.	<u>3.57</u> <u>.61</u>
3	I would prefer not to have an extended service contract if given the choice.	<u>3.57^a</u> <u>.73</u>
5	A teacher does not need any summer time to clean and organize the vocational agriculture classroom and laboratory.	<u>3.56^a</u> <u>.62</u>
6	A teacher should attend and/or conduct county and state fair activities.	<u>3.50</u> <u>.54</u>

(table continues)

Rank	Statement	Mean S.D.
7	As a part of the summer program, the vocational agriculture teacher should visit with managers and employees of agriculturally-related businesses to develop good public relations.	<u>3.47</u> .51
8	The summer is a good time to contact employers of students for feedback on the needs of the students and the vocational agriculture program.	<u>3.46</u> .54
9	Vocational agriculture teachers should allot some summer time for maintaining laboratory facilities and equipment.	<u>3.45</u> .57
9	Teachers should work with FFA committees, particularly the executive committee, during the summer.	<u>3.45</u> .56
11	Vocational agriculture teachers should attend at least one professional meeting such as the OVATA conference during the summer.	<u>3.43</u> .75
12	During the summer a teacher should help students plan and locate placement for their SOEP's.	<u>3.33</u> .97
13	Students have too many summer activities to conduct or attend FFA meetings or FFA activities during the summer.	<u>3.31^a</u> .64
14	Part of the summer should be used to develop lesson plans and teaching aids such as specimen collections.	<u>3.30</u> .57
15	Some time should be used in the summer to meet with adult program participants on a one-to-one basis.	<u>3.27</u> .67
16	Few ideas for program improvement can be gained by visiting other vocational agriculture programs during the summer.	<u>3.26^a</u> .87
17	A teacher can maintain an adequate inventory of supplies and equipment during the regular school year without spending any summer time for this.	<u>3.17^a</u> .78
17	The summer is a good time to make necessary revisions to the curriculum and lesson plans.	<u>3.17</u> .60
19	Teachers should gain work experience in agriculturally-related fields during the summer to increase their expertise in those areas.	<u>3.13</u> .69
20	A teacher should meet with community service groups during the summer to obtain ideas for BOAC projects and make them aware of the vocational agriculture program and activities.	<u>3.11</u> .59
21	A teacher should schedule office hours during the summer to receive calls and complete required reports.	<u>3.10</u> .66
22	The summer is a good time to order lesson materials such as filmstrips and books for the upcoming school year.	<u>3.08</u> .67

(table continues)

Rank	Statement	Mean S.D.
23	Teachers should conduct education tours of agricultural industries, farms, greenhouses, etc., for students and/or adults during the summer.	<u>3.05</u> .72
23	If teachers are to conduct effective summer programs, the state should allow them more reimbursed mileage.	<u>3.05</u> .79
25	The vocational agriculture teacher is too busy to supervise the use of laboratory facilities by students and/or adults in the summer.	<u>3.01^a</u> .88
26	Professional repair persons should be hired to repair laboratory facilities and equipment.	<u>2.96</u> .69
26	The summer is a good time for students to do BOAC projects.	<u>2.96</u> .69
28	During the summer, the teacher should assist in the job placement of program graduates.	<u>2.94</u> .65
28	Required reports like the "Summer Plan of Activities" or the "Summary of Summer Activities" are useful to the school administration and the state.	<u>2.94</u> .78
30	Vocational agriculture teachers benefit from attending FFA camp each summer.	<u>2.91</u> .77
31	If budgets require reductions in extended service, teachers in each of the taxonomies should have equal reductions.	<u>2.90^a</u> .95
32	Vocational agriculture teachers should conduct education classes for students during the summer.	<u>2.83</u> .80
33	A teacher should meet with the advisory committee at least once in the summer.	<u>2.77</u> .71
34	A teacher should be allowed to use some extended service time for earning a Master's Degree or other education.	<u>2.73</u> .96
35	Vocational agriculture teachers have had adequate training to be able to conduct an effective summer program.	<u>2.68</u> .69
36	Teachers benefit little from attending the Washington Leadership Conference Program more than once every three or four years.	<u>2.65^a</u> .85
37	A summer visit by a state supervisor would be helpful to a teacher in conducting summer program activities.	<u>2.56</u> .78
38	A vocational agriculture teacher should conduct at least two educational adult programs during the summer.	<u>2.55</u> .82
39	Teachers in each taxonomy area need twelve weeks of extended service to conduct effective summer programs.	<u>2.52</u> .95

(table continues)

Rank	Statement	Mean S.D.
40	Evaluation of the curriculum and lesson plans is best accomplished during the regular school year.	$\frac{2.43}{.78}$
41	School class time should be used to prepare the FFA Program of Activities.	$\frac{2.13^a}{.74}$
Grand Mean		$\bar{X}=3.09$

^aScale values were reversed for negatively stated items.

Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation and Rank of Teachers' Responses by Statement of Perception of Administrator's Attitude

Rank	Statement	Mean S.D.
1	The school administration feels that they are adequately informed of my summer program activities.	$\frac{3.18}{.51}$
2	My school's administration is supportive of the vocational agriculture summer program activities.	$\frac{3.11}{.80}$
3	My school administrators feel that I do not do enough "teaching" during the summer to merit a twelve month contract.	$\frac{2.98^a}{.81}$
4	If given a choice, my school's administration would prefer that vocational agriculture teachers do not receive extended service contracts.	$\frac{2.88^a}{.94}$
Grand Mean		$\bar{X}=3.02$

Table 3

Correlations Between Mean Scores and Selected Characteristics

	Perceived Administrator Attitudes Toward Summer Programs	Number of Paid Weeks of Extended Service	Number of Years the Teacher Had Taught Vocational Agriculture	Number of Hours Worked Per Week in an Additional Summer Job
Teacher atti- tudes toward summer pro- grams	0.26	0.27 ^a	0.03	-0.27 ^a
Attitudes of administrators toward summer programs as perceived by the teachers	1.00	0.36 ^a	0.10	-0.38 ^a

^aSignificant at alpha level of .05.

Table 4

Mean Totals and Ranks of Teacher Attitudes Toward Summer Programs by Taxonomy Area

Taxonomy Area	Mean	Rank
1. Farm Management	3.39	1
2. Production Agriculture	3.14	2
3. Horticulture	3.13	3
4. Agricultural Products Processing	3.12	4
5. Agricultural Environmental Protection	3.12	4
6. Farm Business Planning and Analysis	3.11	6
7. Resource Conservation	3.09	7
8. Agricultural Supply, Business and Services	3.06	8
9. Forestry	3.00	9
10. Agricultural Industrial Equipment and Services	2.88	10
11. Animal Production and Care	2.88	10

Note. Area 10 significantly lower than areas 1, 2, 3 and 6 (ANOVA, LSD, $p < .05$). Area 11 significantly lower than areas 1 and 2 (ANOVA, LSD, $p < .05$).

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