

TEACHER EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS OF AGRICULTURE  
IN POST-SECONDARY SCHOOLS\*

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Situation

1. Vocational and technical education in agriculture in post-secondary institutions has come into being, for all practical purposes, in the last three years.
  - A. We have in Illinois gone
    1. from no programs to nine programs in seven institutions.
    2. from no students to 440 students.
    3. from no teachers to more than 25 teachers.
  - B. A similar development could be cited for post-secondary programs in other states.
2. The potential growth is just being realized and the planned growth is getting underway.
  - A. In Illinois it appears that we may have, very soon, 38 to 40 post-secondary programs employing as many as 160 teachers and educate as many as 6,000 students.
  - B. Similar projections could be made for other states.

Teacher education problems

The present and projected developments of post-secondary education in agriculture challenge our abilities to develop adequate teacher education programs.

The three primary teacher education problems we are encountering and will encounter with greater intensity in the future are:

1. Assisting present and prospective high school teachers adjust to the demands of post-secondary teaching.
2. Assisting technicians--persons not educated as teachers--to develop competence as teachers.
3. Preparing or assisting teachers develop competencies needed as directors of post-secondary programs to organize and administer these programs.

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We have tried in a meager way at the University of Illinois to attack these three primary problems. Many states probably have done more.

1. Our undergraduate programs were revised so that prospective teachers may specialize in one of several substantive areas such as agronomy or ornamental horticulture. We call this our double major program.
2. A section of our extramural or extension course for first-year teachers was organized by Dr. Jerry Fuller for beginning post-secondary teachers.
3. Each summer a course at the graduate level is offered by the Agricultural Education Division. The enrollment in this course is limited to persons with Master's degrees and persons teaching in junior colleges. This limitation on enrollment produces a homogeneous group of present and prospective post-secondary teachers.
4. Our course on supervised farming was revised and retitled. The title now is Supervised Agricultural Experience Programs. Its purpose is to prepare teachers to organize and conduct placement-employment programs, programs where the students work full or part time in an agricultural business. The Agricultural Occupations Division of Vocational and Technical Education in Illinois has required post-secondary teachers in the state to obtain credit in this course.

These attempts to prepare and serve adequately the educational needs of post secondary teachers are inadequate, but they are a start. They have made us aware of several problems that must be given attention by both teacher educators and supervisors. Some of these problems are:

1. What is the best way to obtain and prepare post-secondary teachers with practical experience and competence in the areas they teach? Our limited experience indicates that requiring these teachers to have work experience in an agricultural business prior to employment as a post-secondary teacher is often not the answer. Often the persons who are willing to return from agricultural businesses to teaching are failures in agricultural businesses, in teaching, or both. We need to develop teacher education programs that will provide practical experience in the area taught, or supplement the practical experience they may have.
2. We need in-teacher education to develop programs that will help screen the potential teachers at the post-secondary level. At present both the potential successful and the potential unsuccessful are attempting to obtain employment in post-secondary programs. We need to help recruit the potential successful and screen out the potential unsuccessful.

3. We need to develop a teacher education program specifically for the technicians--persons who have not prepared themselves to teach.

This will probably need to be an undergraduate program that can provide graduate credit for those who are qualified to receive it.

This program needs to help the technician to understand and accept his role, or prepare himself as a qualified teacher. The program for technicians needs also to put much emphasis on the techniques of effective teaching. We have found that most technicians know their "subject," but they have much difficulty teaching it to others.

4. We need to recognize and develop educational programs to handle the compulsion to change a good vocational and technical education in agriculture program into an often mediocre transfer program.
5. We need to develop programs to educate directors of post-secondary programs in agriculture.

Because of lack of training for their jobs or other reasons most of our new directors

- A. Attempt to establish programs without adequate attention to manpower needs in agriculture.
- B. Give inadequate attention to gearing their programs to the high school programs in agricultural occupations and do not obtain the cooperation of high school teachers of agricultural occupations.

Our new directors seem to lack imagination regarding the potential of post-secondary programs in agriculture. In Illinois they all want to imitate the three programs underway--Agricultural Supply, Agricultural Mechanization, and Ornamental Horticulture--instead of pioneering in some of the seven to nine other manpower need areas in agriculture.

Many additional problems have been identified and could be mentioned, but these five are the ones of major concern to us at present. We are going to continue to try to develop teacher education programs designed to attack these problems and others. We are going to have to pool our ideas, frequently, if we are to accomplish our objectives.