

**The Identification and Prioritization of Tasks of
Vocational Agriculture Instructors as Perceived by
State Supervisors, Teacher Educators and
Vocational Agriculture Instructors in Nebraska**

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Accepted for Publication August 1985

Vocational educators in agriculture have long provided outstanding leadership not only for themselves but for other areas of vocational education and general education as well. Historical overviews have consistently indicated that the vocational agriculture movement has provided American education with an unending list of innovative programs and activities. Yet, Lockwood, 1976, concluded that this list has grown so that there are now more things that could be done than there is possible time in which to do them. According to Hudson, 1978, the differing perceptions of tasks that the vocational agriculture teacher should perform cause frustration on the part of vocational agriculture teachers, state supervisors and teacher educators. It seems that little attention has been paid to helping the vocational agriculture instructor determine the tasks that are most important to the survival and success of not only the vocational agriculture instructor, but ultimately local and state programs of agricultural education.

Program expectations should be consistent, and a balance between program quality and program quantity must be considered and evaluated by local instructors of vocational agriculture, state supervisors and teacher educators. Without such consideration and evaluation, programs may become even more fragmented in addressing overall objectives. As this fragmentation happens, vocational agriculture instructors will likely emphasize those portions of the program with which they either feel the most comfortable or receive the greatest reward and recognition, possibly to the point of neglecting important vocational agriculture instructional stress.

In view of the importance of having a coordinated effort by vocational agriculture instructors, state supervisors and teacher educators in establishing task priorities for vocational agriculture instructors, the following factors contributed to the investigator's interest in this study:

1. A need to identify the tasks performed by the local vocational agriculture instructor.
2. A need to identify the task priorities of vocational agriculture instructors by vocational agriculture instructors, state supervisors and teacher educators.

Purpose of the Study

The study was conducted to determine what vocational agriculture instructors, teacher educators and state supervisors in vocational agriculture perceived as being the task priorities of Nebraska vocational agriculture instructors.

Specifically, the major objectives were to:

1. Identify the major tasks of Nebraska vocational agriculture instructors.

*Journal of the American Association
of Teacher Educators in Agriculture*
Volume 27, Number 1, pp.45-52
DOI: 10.5032/jaatea.1986.01045

2. Prioritize major tasks of Nebraska vocational agriculture instructors as perceived by state supervisors, teacher educators and vocational agriculture instructors.

3. Compare priority rating of tasks by state supervisors, teacher educators and vocational agriculture instructors.

Methodology

Based upon a review of the literature (Dillon, 1977; Hudson, 1978; Iverson and McGuire, 1977; Lockwood, 1976; & Pope, undated) and discussions with vocational agriculture instructors, teacher educators and state supervisors, a preliminary questionnaire was developed. Tasks were identified through a survey of 25 randomly selected Nebraska vocational agriculture instructors who were asked to list as many tasks as they could for their teaching position. The resulting tasks were combined with those previously identified by the researcher and were reviewed by a jury of five graduate students and three staff members in agricultural education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for uniformity and ease of understanding. Suggested changes were incorporated into a final instrument.

All Nebraska secondary vocational agriculture instructors (N=153), teacher educators of agricultural education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (N=10), and state supervisors in the vocational agriculture section (N=3) were included in the study. Of the 166 questionnaires originally mailed, a total of 144, or 86% of the respondents returned the completed questionnaires.

In the final survey instrument, respondents were asked to prioritize 50 tasks. They were asked to rate each task on a 1 to 5 Likert-type rating scale, with 1 being low priority, 3 being average priority and 5 being high priority. Respondents were also asked to respond to certain demographic data including: years of teaching experience, size of school, geographic location of school, University of Nebraska graduate and college degree presently held.

Analysis of the data included: frequencies, means, standard deviations, Chi square and Kendall's correlation of concordance. The data were also analyzed by particular demographic variables and combinations of demographic variables.

Findings

The mean response was computed for each of the 50 tasks of the vocational agriculture instructors for each of the three respondent groups. The rank for the 50 tasks individually was then identified for each of the respondent groups as well as the overall rank when all respondent groups were combined.

Since the findings tended to be skewed toward the upper end of the scale, the researcher took the prerogative of defining the categories as follows: those 16 tasks rated highest (mean response 3.8-5.0), Table 1, were determined to be of high priority; those 16 tasks ranked lowest (mean response 3.0 and below), Table 3, were determined to be of low priority; and the remaining 18 tasks (mean response 3.01-3.79), Table 2, were determined to be of average priority.

Differences in perception exist between the following groups: (a) 10 of the 16 high priority tasks were rated high priority by all three respondent groups; (b) 14 of the 16 low priority tasks were rated a low priority by two of the three respondent groups; (c) overall, vocational

Table 1

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations and Rankings of High Priority Tasks of Vocational Agriculture Instructors by Respondent Group

Composite Group Rank	Task		Present Position		
			VoAg Instr. n=131 (85% of pop)	State Super. n=3 (100% of pop)	Teach Educ. n=10 (100% of pop)
1	Involvement with family	M ^a	4.58 ^b	5.00	5.00
		SD	.77	.00	.00
		R	2.00	1.00	1.00
2	Teaching in the class-room	M	4.71	4.33	4.60
		SD	.63	.58	.96
		R	1.00	11.00	3.50
3	Providing on-farm instruction/SOEP	M	4.25	4.67	4.20
		SD	.91	.58	.92
		R	7.00	3.50	7.50
4	Involvement in discipline problems	M	4.03	4.67	4.30
		SD	1.04	.58	.95
		R	11.00	3.50	6.00
5	Determining curriculum	M	4.10	4.33	4.40
		SD	.82	.58	.84
		R	10.00	11.00	4.00
6	Advising meetings and activities of FFA	M	4.32	4.33	4.00
		SD	.77	.58	.67
		R	4.50	11.00	11.50
7	Developing lesson plans	M	4.32	4.00	4.60
		SD	.82	1.73	.52
		R	4.50	20.50	3.50
8	Instruction related to record books	M	4.28	4.33	3.80
		SD	.95	.58	1.40
		R	6.00	11.00	14.00
9	Conducting public relations--FFA	M	4.24	4.33	3.80
		SD	.83	.58	1.32
		R	8.00	11.00	14.00
10	Instruction in school shop or lab	M	4.40	3.67	4.80
		SD	.90	1.53	.42
		R	3.00	30.00	2.00
11	Involvement with advisory councils	M	3.41	4.67	4.10
		SD	1.10	.58	1.10
		R	25.00	3.50	9.50
12	Conducting public relations--Vo-Ag	M	4.21	4.00	4.00
		SD	.82	.00	1.25
		R	9.00	20.50	11.50
13	Helping students with awards apps.	M	3.68	4.33	3.70
		SD	.99	.58	.82
		R	17.00	11.00	17.00
14	Maintaining shop equipment	M	3.86	4.33	3.40
		SD	.89	.58	1.43
		R	12.00	11.00	22.50
15	Participating in parent/teacher conf.	M	3.54	4.33	3.70
		SD	.95	.58	.82
		R	20.00	11.00	17.00
16	Personal counseling	M	3.79	3.67	4.20
		SD	.98	1.53	.42
		R	13.00	30.00	7.50

^aM=Mean; SD=Standard Deviation; R=Rank. ^bMeans interpreted by assigning the following scores: 3.8-5.0=High Priority; 3.01-3.79=Average Priority; 3.0 and below=Low Priority.

Table 2

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations and Rankings of Average Priority Tasks of Vocational Agriculture Instructors by Respondent Group

Composite Group Rank	Task		Present Position		
			VoAg Instr. n=131 (85% of pop)	State Super. n=3 (100% of pop)	Teach Educ. n=10 (100% of pop)
17	Involvement with county fairs	M ^a	3.66 ^b	4.33	3.40
		SD	.99	.58	.84
		R	19.00	11.00	22.50
18	Participating in professional teacher organization	M	3.45	4.33	3.50
		SD	.95	.58	.71
		R	24.00	11.00	19.50
19	Preparing and grading tests	M	3.68	4.00	3.70
		SD	.85	.00	1.25
		R	18.00	20.50	17.00
20	Participating in FFA Leadership Camp	M	3.77	4.00	3.30
		SD	1.09	.00	.95
		R	14.00	20.50	25.50
21	Grading papers	M	3.48	3.67	4.10
		SD	.94	1.53	.74
		R	22.00	30.00	9.50
22	Involvement in professional growth activities	M	3.49	3.67	3.80
		SD	.97	.58	.63
		R	21.00	30.00	14.00
23	Completing local and state reports	M	3.13	4.67	3.10
		SD	1.15	.58	1.20
		R	30.00	3.50	33.50
24	Preparing budgets/ordering supplies	M	3.75	3.67	3.40
		SD	.93	.58	.97
		R	15.00	30.00	22.50
25	Preparation and attendance at judging contests	M	3.70	3.67	3.30
		SD	.88	.58	.68
		R	16.00	30.00	25.50
26	Conducting ag related field trips	M	3.47	3.67	3.50
		SD	1.00	.58	.71
		R	23.00	30.00	19.50
27	Organizing files, Office, etc.	M	3.33	4.00	3.20
		SD	.86	1.00	.92
		R	26.00	20.50	29.50
28	Attending faculty meetings	M	3.15	4.00	3.20
		SD	1.19	1.00	1.14
		R	29.00	20.50	29.50
29	Placement service for placing students in agribusiness	M	3.00	4.33	2.50
		SD	1.17	.58	1.18
		R	36.00	11.00	40.00
30	Participating in staff meetings	M	3.05	3.67	3.20
		SD	1.09	1.53	1.03
		R	32.00	30.00	29.50
31	Participating in civic organizations	M	3.50	3.33	3.40
		SD	.93	.58	.84
		R	33.00	37.00	22.50
32	Reading current publications	M	3.23	3.33	3.20
		SD	.93	1.15	.79
		R	27.00	37.00	29.50

(table continues)

Composite Group Rank	Task	Present Position			
		VoAg Instr. n=131 (85% of pop)	State Super. n=3 (100% of pop)	Teach Educ. n=10 (100% of pop)	
33	Cleaning and maintaining facilities	M	3.02	3.67	3.20
		SD	1.01	.58	1.14
		R	35.00	30.00	29.50
34	Involvement with young farmers	M	2.41	4.00	2.80
		SD	1.19	1.00	1.32
		R	39.00	20.50	36.00

^aM=Mean; SD=Standard Deviation; R=Rank. ^bMeans interpreted by assigning the following scores: 3.8-5.0=High Priority; 3.01-3.79=Average Priority; 3.0 and below=Low Priority.

agriculture instructors, state supervisors and teacher educators all ranked the following eight tasks as high priority (Table 1):

- Involvement with family
- Teaching in the classroom
- Providing on-farm instruction/SOEP
- Involvement with discipline problems
- Determining curriculum
- Advising meetings and activities of the Future Farmers of America
- Instruction related to record books
- Conducting public relations-FFA

Overall, those tasks that ranked as low priority by all respondent groups (Table 3) included:

- Supervising student teachers
- Involvement with adult farmers
- Advising FFA Alumni
- Supervision of test plot activities
- Conducting junior high exploratory programs
- Coordinating the school farm or land laboratory
- Assisting with athletic events
- Substituting for other teachers

While there was little evidence to indicate that major differences existed between group perceptions of ratings by task, all 50 tasks were analyzed together in a test of independence. Specifically, a test was made to determine if the perception of task importance was independent of respondent group. The observed Chi square statistic was 122.58, which is significant at the .05 level. Thus, it is concluded that the perception of task importance is not the same for the three respondent groups.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the investigation, the following recommendations are made:

1. It is recommended that the Head State Supervisor of Vocational Agriculture meet with state supervisors, teacher educators and representatives of the vocational agriculture instructors to review and discuss the study findings as they affect the role of Nebraska vocational agriculture instructors and their specific job priorities.

Table 3

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations and Rankings of Low Priority Tasks of Vocational Agriculture Instructors by Respondent Group

Composite Group Rank	Task		Present Position		
			VoAg Instr. N=131 (85% of pop)	State Super. N=3 (100% of pop)	Teach Educ. N=10 (100% of pop)
35	Sending correspondence	M ^a	3.03 ^b	3.67	3.00
		SD	1.06	1.15	.82
		R	34.00	30.00	35.00
36	Involvement with state fairs	M	3.08	3.00	3.20
		SD	1.16	1.00	.79
		R	31.00	40.50	29.50
37	Drinking coffee	M	2.36	4.00	2.00
		SD	1.59	1.41	.87
		R	40.00	20.50	46.00
38	Constructing needed equipment and facilities	M	3.22	2.67	2.50
		SD	1.05	1.15	1.08
		R	28.00	44.50	40.00
39	Supervising student teachers	M	2.66	3.00	2.70
		SD	1.41	1.00	1.64
		R	37.00	40.50	37.00
40	Working with student aids	M	2.58	2.67	3.10
		SD	1.03	.58	.74
		R	38.00	44.50	33.50
41	Involvement with adult farmers	M	2.23	3.33	2.60
		SD	1.18	.58	1.17
		R	44.00	37.00	38.00
42	Conducting cooperative education/DO	M	2.07	3.67	2.10
		SD	1.09	.58	1.20
		R	46.00	30.00	45.00
43	Advising FFA Alumni	M	2.33	3.00	2.30
		SD	1.11	1.00	.95
		R	41.00	40.50	42.50
44	Supervision of test plot activities	M	2.24	3.00	2.20
		SD	1.13	1.00	.92
		R	43.00	40.50	44.00
45	Conducting Jr. High exploratory programs	M	2.27	2.33	2.50
		SD	1.19	.58	1.35
		R	42.00	47.00	40.00
46	Coordinating the school farm or land lab	M	2.10	2.67	2.30
		SD	1.20	.58	1.06
		R	45.00	44.50	42.50
47	Duties of study hall, ticket taking, halls	M	3.22	2.67	1.70
		SD	.85	2.08	1.06
		R	28.00	44.50	47.00
48	Assisting with athletic events	M	1.82	1.33	1.30
		SD	.61	.58	.68
		R	47.00	50.00	49.00
49	Driving school bus	M	1.31	1.67	1.40
		SD	.82	1.15	1.26
		R	50.00	49.00	48.00

(table continues)

50 Substituting for other teachers	M	1.41	2.00	1.30
	SD	.74	1.00	.42
	R	49.00	48.00	50.00

Note. Overall, for all 50 tasks: $W=0.8339$ (significant $W, df=49.$); χ^2 -square=122.588 (significant at .05 level).

^aM=Mean; SD=Standard Deviation; R=Rank. ^bMeans interpreted by assigning the following scores: 3.8-5.0=High Priority; 3.01-3.79=Average Priority; 3.0 and below=Low Priority.

2. Based upon the following tasks (low composite priority rank by state supervisors, teacher educators and vocational agriculture instructors), it is suggested that the following tasks be reviewed and decisions made regarding the emphasis these tasks should receive by the teachers.

<u>Priority</u>	<u>Task</u>
35	Sending correspondence
36	Involvement with state fairs
37	Drinking coffee
38	Constructing needed equipment and facilities
39	Supervising student teachers
40	Working with student aids
41	Involvement with adult farmers
42	Conducting cooperative education/DO type programs
43	Advising FFA Alumni
44	Supervision of test pilot activities
45	Conducting junior high exploratory programs
46	Coordinating the school farm or land laboratory
47	Duties of study hall, ticket taking, halls
48	Assisting with athletic events
49	Driving school bus
50	Substituting for other teachers

3. Consideration should be given toward determining the relative importance of each task and a determination made by state supervisors and teacher educators in conjunction with local vocational agriculture instructors and administrators regarding the contribution of each task to strengthening Nebraska vocational agriculture programs.

4. Tasks identified as being high priority should be included in pre-service and in-service course offerings in the teacher preparation program.

Implications for Further Research

This investigation revealed that the following studies may be considered:

1. A comparative study of state supervisors, teacher educators and vocational agriculture instructors in other states to determine national priorities for vocational agriculture instructors' tasks.

2. A comparative study to relate the findings of this study to those of time management studied by Dillon in Nebraska.

3. A study of public school administrators and citizens to determine the expectations they have for Nebraska vocational agriculture programs, which then might be compared to the present study.

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