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**PREPARATION OF VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURAL TEACHERS
THROUGH THE UNIFIED APPROACH TO VOCATIONAL
TEACHER EDUCATION***

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Recently, there has been concern over the possibility of unified vocational teacher education. This organization has been called an "educational mix," "occupational mix," and "interdisciplinary" approach to vocational teacher education. Regardless of the terminology used, such curricular innovations are based upon the consolidation of subject matter found to be common to each of the vocational disciplines represented in teacher education institutions.

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Subject matter elements which are unique to each of the vocational services form the basis for program identity in teacher education. Certainly, those unique elements should be identified with specialized curricula, because they provide the basis for respective vocational service identity.

The traditional approach used in vocational agricultural teacher preparation revolved around a program centered concept (See Figure 1). In the majority of typical teacher education institutions the curriculum was divided into three distinct categories, namely, general education, technical agriculture, and professional education. These responsibilities were respectively attended by appropriate departments with limited coordination among them. Lack of inter-disciplinary contact resulted in duplication of efforts in certain instances and inadequate attention to other details of curricular development. The program centered traditional curriculum with its accompanying administrative organization was instrumental in achieving professional identity for vocational agriculture. However, this may have been partially responsible for the difficulties of vocational agricultural education to enter the mainstream of the education process.

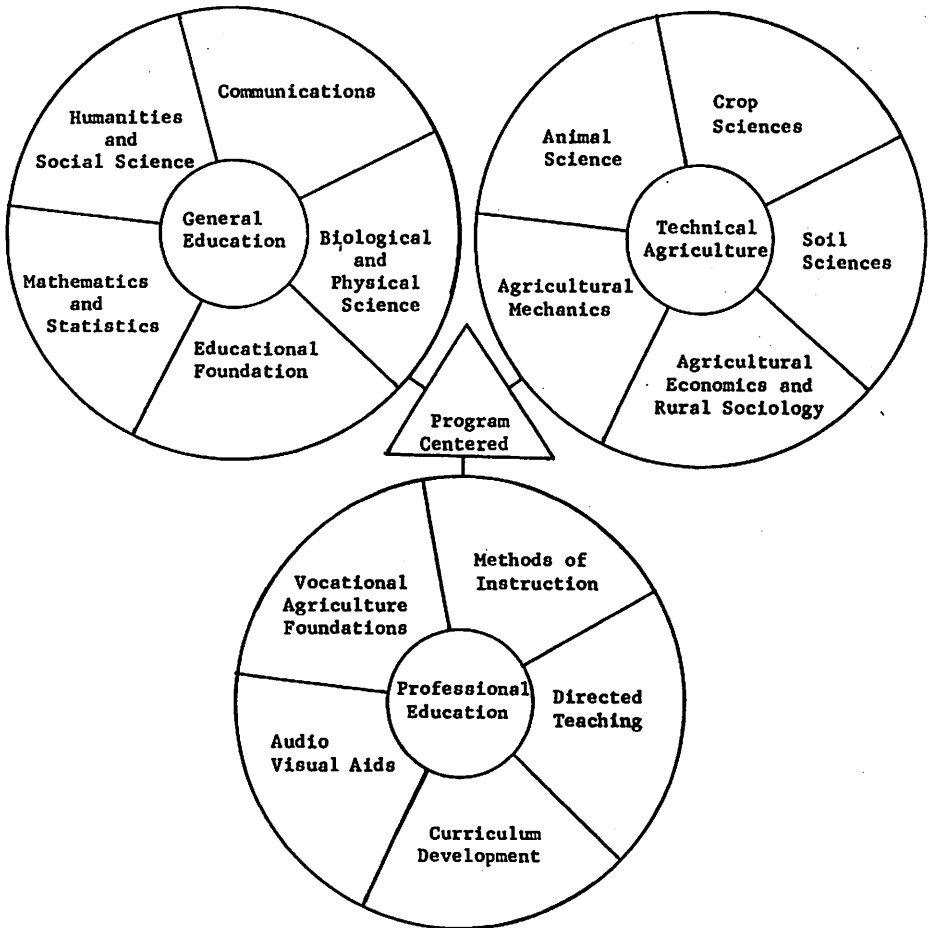
A. Traditional Approaches to Vocational Agricultural Teacher Preparation

A summary of the progress in teacher preparation in agriculture was prepared by W. H. Martin in the AATEA Publication, Teacher Education in Agriculture, V. R. Cardozier, Editor, 1967.

"Teacher education in agriculture, a professional sub-discipline, is an innovation of this century. Its inception followed a growing demand for teachers of agriculture in public schools, and regularized status was achieved after the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act. It developed gradually, as one part of each state's land-grant college, with assistance from both state and federal educational agencies. Major efforts were devoted to preservice and inservice education of teachers of vocational agriculture. By 1966 it was established in 76 colleges or universities, of which 63 were land-grant institutions. The number of teacher educators employed at these institutions was about 260, but almost half of the institutions had no more than two positions each in this category.

Although organized in various departments and operating under diverse conditions, a gradual unification of the profession and a growing identity with professional education took place. It was initially directly involved in providing leadership for the development of local programs of vocational agriculture and influenced by forces of the times, gave emphasis to efficiency of agricultural production."

FIGURE 1.
TRADITIONAL CURRICULUM IN
AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION



As a result of recent legislation teacher education is now entering a new stage of development. New legislation and developments in higher education are forces moving the profession into a more complex situation. The signs of the times are calling to us to join forces with the total university program in order to develop a teacher education program adaptable to conditions in the future.

Certain concerns at present are centered around the delineation of responsibility for the conduct of general, technical, and professional educational preparation. Let's observe each of these categories independently to determine what is common and what is unique to each of them.

B. Common and Unique Elements of Vocational Teacher Education

1. General Education

The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education provided these comments:

"All teacher education should require a pattern of general education in such amount and of such nature as to assure that all teachers will be broadly educated and cultured persons.

The total pattern for each teacher education curriculum should provide general education, subject specialization, and professional education in such amounts as to assure reasonable competence in each area and provide balance in the total pattern."

I submit the thesis that whatever is considered necessary for all teachers can be classed as "general education" and hence they are common elements. Those elements of general education which lie on the fringe areas of technical and professional education are possible sources of concern in the matter of determining commonality or uniqueness.

2. Technical Agriculture

Much of what is described as technical education can be classed as unique to the agricultural sciences. There may exist some common elements within technical agriculture. For example, the principles of feeding, breeding, anatomy, physiology, and management of livestock are the same regardless of which species is involved. These and other similar areas are fruitful grounds for unified technical agricultural subject matter approaches.

3. Professional Education

Perhaps the area of study causing vocational educators the greatest concern is the interpretation of common and unique elements in professional education. It is in this category that the concept of an "educational mix" in vocational teacher education might take roots and flourish. It appears that our task is to examine the extent to which a sharing of common knowledge can be most beneficial for our graduates. Perhaps the answers can best be found in the provision of across-the-board vocational education for all youth.

Answers are needed to these questions:

- a. Which of the established principles and practices of general education are relevant for vocational educators?
- b. Are the methods of instruction the same in each of the vocational services?
- c. What aspects of learning resources apply to all of the vocational services?
- d. How may curriculum development be related to each of the vocational disciplines?
- e. Is professional internship experience unique to each vocational discipline?
- f. Are there commonalities in the mechanical skills inherent to the respective vocational services?
- g. Are there advantages or disadvantages in becoming personally acquainted with the operation of other vocational programs?

C. Common and Unique Elements of In-Service Vocational Teacher Education

1. Short-term Professional and Technical Workshops

If there are advantages of cross-training in pre-service education, then surely there must be some benefits to similar approaches for in-service work.

Questions for discussion:

- a. To what extent will the educational mix exist in the secondary and post-secondary schools?
- b. What knowledge is beneficial to vocational services across the board?
- c. Would it be practical to consolidate personnel of the various vocational services for short-term training institutes?
- d. How can common elements be most effectively taught on a joint basis?

2. Post-graduate Program

Post-graduate programs have for years served to provide a healthy exchange of ideas among and within vocational services. With the advent of across-the-board vocational education for all youth it appears that an even greater exchange of philosophies and techniques might prove beneficial.

Some questions for concern:

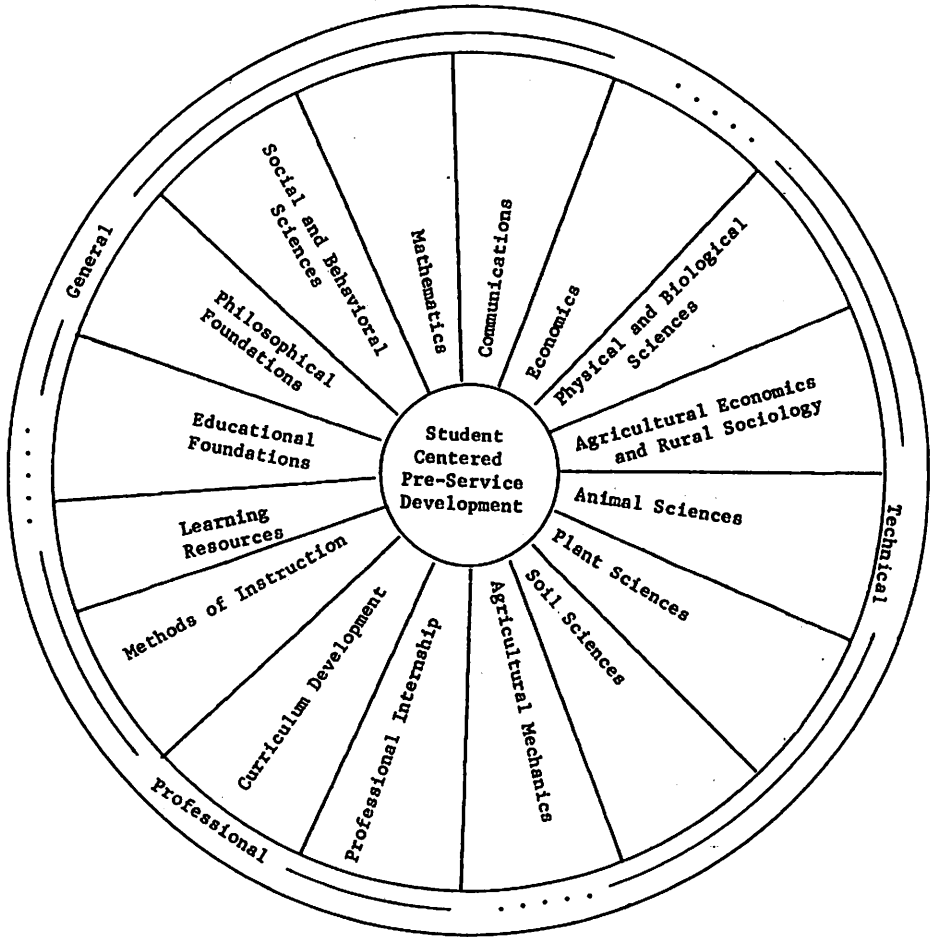
- a. Should post-graduate study concentrate on the accumulation of subject matter knowledge or upon how to use subject matter?
- b. Does an understanding of the history, philosophies, and underlying principles of vocational education contribute to an improved working relationship between vocational educators?
- c. Who should be responsible for teaching common and unique elements of vocational education in post-graduate programs?
- d. Who should be responsible for organizing and administering unified offerings in vocational teacher education?
- e. Which administrative patterns are best suited to achieving the unified program of vocational education?

D. Interdisciplinary Approach to Agricultural Teacher Education

A curricular structure which effectively provides an exchange of ideas among vocational educators of diverse disciplinary areas is the "Interdisciplinary Approach to Vocational Education." Figure 2 is a model of this pre-service agricultural education curricular design. Total development of the student is considered the central foci of each subject matter area. The end result of this experience will be an individual who is generally educated in arts and sciences, technically competent in agriculture and mechanics, and professionally prepared to work with youth and adults across the board in vocational education.

The Interdisciplinary Approach is based upon a "total university" commitment to vocational teacher education. General education, fundamentals which are essential to all teachers regardless of speciality, is provided by the School or Departments of Arts and Sciences. Technical subjects for agricultural educators are primarily provided in the School of Agriculture. Professional development is the primary responsibility of the Vocational Teacher Education Department, however certain duties may be shared with other departments.

FIGURE 2.
 INTER DISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO
 AGRICULTURAL TEACHER EDUCATION



Within the category of professional development there appears to exist the greatest possibility for unified vocational teacher education. Essentially those elements of professional education which are common to all vocational disciplines should be shared by each of the services. This cooperative venture will serve to create a mutually beneficial understanding among students of the respective vocational educational services.

The possible loss of program identity has been voiced as a serious limitation to unified vocational teacher education programs. This is a vital and erstwhile concern, thus some attention should be directed toward this issue. Those elements which are common to each of the vocational disciplines should continue to be related to each of the respective services to assure practicality and program identity.

Summary

The Interdisciplinary Approach to Vocational Teacher Education has been proposed as a possible means of agricultural teacher preparation. This procedure is designed to prepare agricultural educators to enter the mainstream of comprehensive vocational education. A bond of common understanding will be shared with persons in other vocational disciplines as a result of studying mutual problems. Vocational services identities will be retained through unique elements in vocational teacher education programs.

Issues which must be resolved before such an approach can be successful are these:

1. Elements common to the teacher education program in general.
2. Elements common to the vocational teacher education program.
3. Desirability of confining the common elements in preparing vocational educators to the pre-service, graduate instruction, or other in-service functions.
4. Extent to which the common elements approach in vocational teacher education can be expected to promote the educational mix at the local school level.
5. Inherent advantages and disadvantages of the common elements approach to vocational agricultural teacher education.

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