

Factors Indicating VoAg/FFA Program Quality
as Perceived by Idaho VoAg Instructors and Principals

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In public school education, as in private industry, a difference of opinion may exist between management and production about the quality of activities inherent in an occupation. The high school principals and vocational agriculture teachers in our public school systems are certainly no exception. Both have the common goal of making the vocational program within the school district the highest quality possible. In order to develop a high quality vocational agriculture program, these two individuals must not only communicate with one another what they think are the most important and highest quality activities in which the vocational agriculture teacher should participate, but should also be in relative agreement.

Review of Literature

Few studies comparing factors that reflect vocational agriculture program quality have been completed. However, there have been several studies concerning how the vocational agriculture teacher and/or the high school administrator in Idaho view the vocational agriculture program. The importance of maintaining effective relationships between vocational agriculture instructors and administrators is substantiated in studies conducted by Cole (1977), Rogers (1978), Rowe (1979), Gay (1979), and Zumbach (1979). In each of these studies both principals and teachers were asked to rate the importance of various tasks of the vocational agriculture instructor. Developing good working relations with administrators, faculty, and staff was the highest rated single activity among the vocational agriculture teachers and principals in Utah, Iowa, and Colorado. The same trait was rated as one of the top three activities by vocational instructors and principals in Arizona, California, and Virginia.

Several Idaho studies indicated the existence of differences between perceptions of administrators and perceptions of teachers about the priority of some vocational agriculture instructor activities. Rush (1982) indicated that vocational agriculture teachers viewed nonvocational supervisory activities as being much lower in importance than did administrators. Administrators thought that completing state reports was a much more important activity than did vocational agriculture teachers.

Other differences in perceptions centered around the summer program and the use of teacher time for various activities in the summer. Gardner (1961) found that 53.2% of the administrators thought that extended summer and employment was justified, while 26.6% thought it was not justified, and 20.2% were uncertain.

Douglas (1962) asked administrators to evaluate vocational agriculture program objectives. He observed that objectives suggested by administrators in 1962 were very close to those currently in place, indicating that perhaps administrators may have had a definite impact on program direction and objectives for vocational agriculture.

Problem

The problem addressed in this study was to determine factors which may indicate a quality high school vocational agriculture program, as perceived by Idaho vocational agriculture teachers and their principals. The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Identify specific indicators of quality vocational agriculture programs as perceived by Idaho vocational agriculture instructors.
2. Identify specific indicators of quality vocational agriculture programs as perceived by principals of Idaho vocational agriculture programs.
3. Determine the difference in mean value ratings of selected factors indicating vocational agriculture program quality by Idaho vocational agriculture instructors and principals of vocational agriculture programs.

Procedure

The population for this study consisted of Idaho vocational agriculture instructors and principals who administer a vocational agriculture program.

Respondents included one vocational agriculture instructor from each department in Idaho (n=73) and the high school principals who administered those vocational agriculture programs (n=74). Of 147 teachers and principals from Idaho, 48 vocational agriculture instructors (65.8%), and 38 principals (51.4%) responded, for an initial response rate of 86 out of 147 (58.5%). A follow-up of 11 nonrespondents was completed and results compared with initial data using the SPSS T-TEST. No differences were identified and all responses were included in the study for a final response rate of 97 out of 147 (66%).

A one to nine Likert-type scale was used to determine value of factors indicating vocational agriculture program quality, with "1" being not an indicator of program quality, and "9" being a strong indicator of program quality.

In determining differences in value placed on factors indicating vocational agriculture program quality by respondent group, data were analyzed for differences in means. These comparisons were performed through the use of the SPSS T-TEST which computes means, standard deviations, and t-values.

Findings

Factors Indicating Program Quality

Data in Table 1 provides information regarding the value of 38 factors rated as being indicators of vocational agriculture/FFA program quality by vocational agriculture instructors and their principals.

Principals considered "professional pride of the vocational agriculture teacher" as being the highest indicator of program quality (8.56 on a 9 point scale). Followed by "general organization of the vocational agriculture teacher" (8.16), and "student respect for the vocational agriculture teacher" (8.12). Ranked fourth and fifth respectively by the principals were the "technical ability of the vocational agriculture teacher" (7.98) and the "ability of the vocational agriculture teacher to handle discipline problems" (7.93).

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, Rankings and T-Values for the Value of Factors Indicating Program Quality by Idaho Vocational Agriculture Teachers and High School Principals

Factors indicating program quality		Vo-ag teachers	Principals	Total	t-Value
Opinion of parents	M	8.02	7.88	7.96	0.61
	SD	1.06	1.12	1.08	
	R	1	6	3	
Student respect for teacher	M	7.98	8.12	8.04	-0.72
	SD	0.88	0.96	0.91	
	R	2	3	2	
Professional pride of teacher	M	7.93	8.56	8.20	-3.45**
	SD	1.06	0.63	0.95	
	R	3	1	1	

Table 1 (continued)

Factors indicating program quality		Vo-ag teachers	Principals	Total	t-Value
Administration support for program	M	7.63	7.63	7.63	0.01
	SD	1.19	1.22	1.19	
	R	4	9	7	
How teacher handles discipline problems	M	7.57	7.93	7.73	-1.42
	SD	1.40	0.99	1.24	
	R	5	5	4	
Opinion of the general public	M	7.55	7.28	7.43	1.00
	SD	1.37	1.33	1.35	
	R	6	15	9	
Use of shop safety procedures	M	7.52	7.81	7.65	-1.19
	SD	1.16	1.28	1.22	
	R	7	7	6	
General organization of the vocational agriculture teacher	M	7.33	8.16	7.70	-3.00**
	SD	1.60	0.95	1.41	
	R	8	2	5	
Class and shop behavior of students	M	7.19	7.40	7.28	-.78
	SD	1.40	1.21	1.32	
	R	9	12	11	
Student enthusiasm for FFA activities	M	7.17	7.48	7.30	-0.91
	SD	1.68	1.63	1.65	
	R	10	11	10	
Employment success of vo-ag program grads	M	7.16	6.32	6.79	2.28*
	SD	1.48	2.14	1.84	
	R	11	31	19	
Technical ability of the vo-ag teacher	M	7.15	7.98	7.52	-3.27**
	SD	1.39	1.01	1.30	
	R	12	4	8	
Amount of classroom activity	M	7.04	7.18	7.10	-0.56
	SD	1.35	1.26	1.30	
	R	13	19	13	
Appearance or mannerisms of the teacher	M	6.94	7.67	7.27	-2.72**
	SD	1.50	1.04	1.36	
	R	14	8	12	
Average achievement level of vo-ag students	M	6.81	6.37	6.62	1.52
	SD	1.36	1.50	1.43	
	R	15	28	23	
Length of vo-ag teacher contract	M	6.81	5.64	6.30	2.37
	SD	2.20	2.60	2.45	
	R	16	35	28	

Table 1 (continued)

Factors indicating program quality		Vo-ag teachers	Principals	Total	t-Value
Student participation in FFA activities	M	6.80	7.30	7.02	-1.46
	SD	1.86	1.46	1.70	
	R	17	13	15	
Organization of the vo-ag classroom	M	6.68	7.26	6.94	-2.32*
	SD	1.26	1.14	1.23	
	R	18	16	16	
Amount of curriculum planning	M	6.63	7.60	7.06	-3.76
	SD	1.35	1.16	1.35	
	R	19	10	14	
Quality of student's SOE projects	M	6.62	6.97	6.78	-1.11
	SD	1.59	1.37	1.50	
	R	20	24	21	
Organization of the vo-ag shop	M	6.61	7.19	6.87	-2.08*
	SD	1.46	1.20	1.37	
	R	21	18	17	
Material content of the vo-ag program	M	6.55	7.07	6.78	-1.88
	SD	1.41	1.24	1.36	
	R	22	21	20	
Academic advancement of the vo-ag student	M	6.52	6.34	6.44	0.51
	SD	1.68	1.58	1.62	
	R	23	29	25	
Willingness of teacher to accept assignments	M	6.52	7.30	6.87	-2.01*
	SD	2.11	1.61	1.93	
	R	24	13	17	
Social advancements of vo-ag students	M	6.48	6.34	6.42	0.40
	SD	1.49	1.79	1.62	
	R	25	29	26	
Amount of teacher project supervision	M	6.31	7.23	6.72	-2.97**
	SD	1.59	1.41	1.57	
	R	26	17	22	
P.R. activities carried on by vo-ag teacher	M	6.25	7.05	6.59	-2.27*
	SD	1.77	1.69	1.77	
	R	27	22	24	
Opinion of other teachers	M	6.22	6.16	6.20	0.18
	SD	1.68	1.59	1.63	
	R	28	32	31	
Amount of awards won by students	M	6.11	6.51	6.29	-1.09
	SD	1.91	1.62	1.79	
	R	29	25	29	

Table 1 (continued)

Factors indicating program quality		Vo-ag teachers	Principals	Total	t-Value
Financial standing of the FFA chapter	M	6.07	6.40	6.22	-0.78
	SD	2.13	1.85	2.01	
	R	30	27	30	
FFA chapter contest placings	M	5.79	6.42	6.07	-1.64
	SD	1.96	1.75	1.88	
	R	31	26	32	
Student participation in fairs	M	5.74	7.00	6.30	-3.72**
	SD	1.77	1.50	1.76	
	R	32	23	27	
Organization of the vo-ag teacher's desk	M	5.70	5.93	5.80	-0.61
	SD	1.88	1.72	1.81	
	R	33	33	34	
Amount of FFA community service activities	M	5.65	5.67	5.66	-0.09
	SD	1.39	1.41	1.39	
	R	34	34	35	
Supplemental teacher pay for FFA activities	M	5.57	5.55	5.56	0.04
	SD	2.56	2.44	2.50	
	R	35	36	36	
Size of shop construction projects	M	5.42	5.51	5.46	-0.21
	SD	2.00	1.97	1.97	
	R	36	37	37	
Teacher promptness at meeting report deadlines	M	5.13	7.09	6.00	-5.24**
	SD	2.08	1.46	2.07	
	R	37	20	33	
Amount of school time used for FFA activities	M	5.03	4.42	4.77	1.57
	SD	1.81	1.96	1.89	
	R	38	38	38	

Note. 1=not an indicator; 5=average indicator; 9=strong indicator. Negative t-Value indicates that the principals valued that factor higher.

*t-Value significant at the .05 level,

**t-Value significant at the .01 level.

The item ranked highest as an indicator of program quality by vocational agriculture instructors was the "opinion of parents" (8.02), followed by "student respect for the vocational agriculture teacher" (7.98), and "professional pride of the vocational agriculture teacher" (7.93). The "administration support for the vocational agriculture program" (7.63) was ranked as the fourth most important

factor indicating quality by the vocational agriculture teacher. The "vocational agriculture teacher's ability to handle discipline problems (7.57) was ranked fifth. It should be noted that of the 38 factors surveyed only one factor was raised as having a below average value by either the principal or the vocational agriculture teacher group. The principals regarded "the amount of school time used for FFA activities" as being a below average indicator of program quality (4.42). Both groups ranked this factor 38th. The vocational agriculture teachers valued 13 of the factors well above average as indicators of quality (7.00 or above) while the principals valued 23 of the 38 items well above average as indicators of a quality program.

Eight factors had statistically significant differences between means of principals and means of vocational agriculture teachers at the .01 level and six factors had statistically significant differences at the .05 level.

The significant differences shown in Table 1 could be somewhat deceiving if viewed only in light of the t -value which measures the differences in means between respondent groups. The principals as a group, generally valued all factors higher than did the vocational agriculture teachers. This is evidenced by the fact that 27 of the 38 items surveyed had a negative t -value, indicating that principals placed higher values on those items than vocational agriculture teachers placed on those items.

Several factors were observed to have a large difference in their rank between the teacher and principal group. The factor with the largest t -value (-5.24), "teacher promptness at meeting report deadlines," was ranked 37th by the teachers and 20th by the principals. The next largest t -value (-3.76) "amount of curriculum planning," was ranked 19th by the vocational agriculture teachers and 10th by the principals. The third highest t -value (-3.72), "amount of student participation in fairs," was ranked 32nd by teachers and 23rd by principals.

Several factors showed a large statistical difference while revealing a very small difference in ranks. The fourth highest t -value observed (-3.45) was for "professional pride of the vocational agriculture teacher." This factor was ranked first by the principals and third by the teachers.

The information in Table 1 further indicates that large t -values may not always reveal large differences between the two groups, but may be an indicator of the strength of opinion for specific factors which indicate vocational agriculture program quality.

Summary

Fifty-four vocational agriculture teachers and 43 principals administering Idaho vocational agriculture programs provided information about their perceptions of factors that indicate vocational agriculture/FFA program quality. The major findings of this study are summarized as follows:

1. Both respondent groups had an average of 10 years or more teacher/administrative experience, indicating their familiarity with vocational agriculture programs.
2. Using a scale of 1 to 9 ("1" being not an indicator of quality and "9" being a strong indicator of quality) 13 items were valued above 7.00 by vocational agriculture teachers and 23 were valued above 7.00 by principals.
3. The item valued highest as an indicator of program quality by the vocational agriculture teachers was "the opinion of parents" (8.02).
4. The factor valued highest by high school principals was "the professional pride of the vocational agriculture teacher" (8.56).
5. The quality indicator valued lowest by both teachers (5.03) and principals (4.42) was "the amount of school time used for FFA activities."
6. Of the 38 factors indicating vocational agriculture program quality, eight differences in means were significant at the .01 level and six were significant at the .05 level, indicating some differences of opinion between the vocational agriculture teacher and principal groups regarding the value of specific factors as indicators of program quality.
7. "Teacher promptness at meeting report deadlines" was the factor indicating program quality with the largest difference in opinion between vocational agriculture teachers and high school principals.

Recommendations

From the results of this study it is recommended that:

1. High school principals and vocational agriculture teachers meet, discuss their perceptions of a quality program, and attempt to determine a common set of priorities for maintaining a quality program.

2. Vocational agriculture teachers/FFA advisors try to reduce, whenever possible, the amount of school time used for FFA activities.
3. Vocational agriculture teachers review the items in Table 1 and consider re-evaluation of their attitudes toward quality factors that principals valued higher; such as amount of curriculum planning, willingness of teacher to accept assignments, student participation in fairs, and promptness at meeting report deadlines.
4. Vocational agriculture teachers educate their respective principals about factors they consider important but are not considered as important by the high school principals; such as length of the teacher contract and the employment success of program graduates.
5. Teacher educators inform agriculture education majors of indicators of program quality and prepare them to communicate with administrators about the necessity of setting priorities that are in harmony with school district goals and objectives.
6. State departments of vocational education assist in educating high school principals and vocational agriculture teachers regarding factors indicating the quality vocational agriculture programs.

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