PRIORITIES OF MISSOURI TEACHERS OF VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE REGARDING TEACHING, CIVIC, CHURCH FAMILY, AND SELF-RELATED ACTIVITIES

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Teachers of vocational agriculture have long experienced time pressures on their jobs. More than four decades ago, Hicks (1937) wrote to instructors of agriculture regarding visiting students in young farmer classes, "I know what you are saying. I have trouble finding time to call on them often myself." Noting the problems of three decades ago, Coggin (1953) stated, "You have, in the local program, more than any one man can do well." The situation has not improved. More recently, Lockwood (1976) observed:

> We seem to make more demands on instructors' time every year. In Iowa during the last 18 years, we have added at least eight new time-consuming activities in our vocational agriculture departments . . . A beginning teacher is faced with the very frustrating task of deciding what he will be forced to leave undone.

How much time do vocational agriculture teachers devote to their professional responsibilities? In 1945, Sweany determined that teachers of agriculture in Michigan averaged 58.5 hours per week on the job. In 1950, Hill found that vocational agriculture instructors in West Virginia used a median of 54.2 hours per week on the job. Albertin (1957) also found an average of 54.2 hours per week in his Missouri study. Dillon (1976) found an average work year of 2,652 hours for teachers of agriculture in Nebraska. Allowing a working year of forty-nine weeks would result in an average work week of 54.1 hours. All of these studies included summer work except that by Sweany.

While reviewing research on why former teachers of vocational agriculture left teaching, Moore (1978) noted that time required was listed in 11 of 27 studies from 1940 to 1978 as a factor in the teachers' departure. He found time concerns listed in all of the studies completed after 1970.

However, limited data were available to describe how teachers of vocational agriculture should utilize their time. Therefore, the need to know how teachers of vocational agriculture prioritize their activities provided the focus for this investigation.

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Purposes of the Study

The primary purposes of the study were to ascertain the priorities that teachers of vocational agriculture in Missouri indicated for civic, self, family, and teaching-related activities and to ascertain if a program planning workshop caused change in the priorities of teachers. The following null hypotheses were tested at an alpha level of .05:

Ho^1: There are no significant differences among the priority ratings given to the activities by the teachers of vocational agriculture.

Ho^2: There are no significant differences between the priority ratings for the activities at the beginning of the program planning workshops and at the time of a follow-up survey.

Procedures

Experimental and ex post facto procedures were utilized for the study although the initial thrust was descriptive. The data were compiled to determine the priorities for activities related to the use of time by Missouri teachers of vocational agriculture. An experimental approach was utilized for the evaluation of the effects of the workshop.

An instrument used by Lockwood (1976) in Iowa was revised for the study with the aid of a panel of experts on agricultural education in Missouri. The revised instrument was pilot tested and a test-retest procedure was used to check for reliability. A Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient was computed for the data and yielded a group reliability rating of .94.

The initial data were collected as a part of the annual in-service workshop for teachers of vocational agriculture during the fall of 1979. The instrument used consisted of a listing of 35 activities of a teacher.

Of the teachers of vocational agriculture in secondary programs in Missouri, 242 (71 percent of the population) attended a workshop, and 217 (90 percent) left usable data and were included in the study. One workshop was held in each of the 13 geographic areas of the state. Follow-up data were collected by mailing the instrument to 77 of the 217 participants (35 percent) using a stratified random sampling procedure by geographic area. Replies were received from 64 of the 77 teachers selected for the follow-up (an 83 percent response rate), and 61 were acceptable for analysis, a 79 percent usable return.

Certain limitations related to the study should be noted. Each workshop was conducted during one five-hour period with a one-hour recess for dinner. While the format and the topic for each presentation for each workshop was the same, the personnel

utilized in the four-hour workshop session varied among the areas. In addition, the workshops were conducted during the course of an eight-week period, and the follow-up period was extended for another five weeks.

Data were analyzed using an analysis of variance procedure followed by a Duncan's multiple range test to test the first hypothesis. The second hypothesis was tested using an analysis of variance procedure.

Findings

The mean was computed for each of the 35 activities from the ratings of the 217 teachers. Out of a possible 4.000, the means ranged from 3.705 for teaching local day classes to 0.724 for the local FFA Alumni Association. Table 1 lists the activities ranked on the the basis of the mean ratings by the teachers and identifies significant differences found among the mean ratings by the Duncan multiple range test. Means which have different letters beside them were significantly different; any two means followed by the same letter were not significantly different. Inasmuch as there were significant differences among the ratings of the items, the first hypothesis was rejected.

Teaching local day classes was found to be rated higher than each of the other 34 activities. FFA activities on the local level (3.175) and production and placement programs (3.129) were each rated significantly higher than any of the remaining 32 activities. Records on production and placement programs received the fourth highest mean rating (2.834), significantly higher than any of the 31 activities rated below it. Teaching calendars, course outlines, and course of study received the fifth highest rating (2.553), which was significantly higher than the means of 24 of the remaining 30 activities. The local FFA Alumni Association (0.724) ranked thirty-fifth.

Forty-nine of the 61 respondents to the follow-up survey used the quota of 70 markers for both testings. Table 2 contains the means for each activity for the respondents. Using analysis of variance, significantly different ratings were found between testings for four activities. Therefore, the second hypothesis was rejected. On the posttest the ratings of the respondents were significantly lower for paper work required locally, keeping up-to-date in agriculture, and supporting all school activities.

Conclusions

Based on the findings and subject to the limitations of this study, the following conclusions were formulated.

Because the mean rating of each activity was significantly different from at least 27 of the other 34 activities, the con-

Table 1

MEANS, RANKINGS, AND SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES AMONG ACTIVITIES AS RATED BY TEACHERS

Rank	Number	Activity	Mean	Sign. Diff.*
1	(1)	Teaching local day classes	3.705	a
2	(3)	FFA activities on local level	3.175	b
3	(12)	SOEP (production & placement programs)	3.129	b
4	(13)	SOEP records	2.834	c
5	(24)	Teaching calendars, course of study, etc.	2.553	d
6	(33)	Daily family life	2.521	de
7T	(5)	Vo-ag contests	2.484	def
7T	(21)	Classes, workshops, prof. development	2.484	def
9	(34)	Family life on weekends	2.470	def
10	(18)	Effective PR program	2.461	def
11	(4)	FFA activities past local level	2.406	def
12	(22)	Keeping current in agriculture	2.336	ef
13	(16)	Paper work required locally	2.313	ef
14	(26)	Neatness and organization	2.272	fg
15	(32)	Personal leisure time	2.083	gh
16	(7)	Exhibiting projects	2.065	h
17	(17)	Paper work required above local level	2.060	h
18	(31)	Having a nice home	1.968	hi
19	(19)	Participation in vo. ed. organizations	1.940	hi
20	(35)	Second source of income	1.899	hi
21	(8)	Adult and young farmer classes	1.871	hij
22T	(27)	Visiting with others	1.811	ij
22T	(30)	Participation in church activities	1.811	ij
24T	(2)	Plan and conduct field trips	1.770	ij
24T	(14)	Visits to potential vo-ag students	1.770	ij
26	(11)	Local vo-ag advisory council	1.659	jk
27	(23)	Coordination with other agencies	1.475	k
28	(9)	The Young Farmer Association	1.465	k
29	(10)	Visits to adult/YF class members	1.456	k
30	(28)	Support all school activities	1.226	l
31	(29)	Participation in civic organizations	1.106	lm
32	(15)	Local school duties	1.051	lm
33	(20)	Prof. organizations outside vo. ed.	0.926	m
34	(25)	Willingly help anyone at anytime	0.728	n
35	(6)	Local FFA Alumni Association	0.724	n

N = 217 teachers

*Means followed by different letters are significantly different (P<.05) by the Duncan Multiple Range Test.

Table 2

MEANS OF INITITAL AND FOLLOW-UP RATINGS OF ACTIVITIES

Item No.	Activity	Means		F*
		Inital	Follow-up	
1.	Teaching local day classes	3.69	3.76	0.82
2.	Plan and conduct field trips	1.86	1.80	0.32
3.	FFA activities on local level	3.18	3.33	2.18
4.	FFA activities past local level	2.55	2.47	0.44
5.	Vo-ag contests	2.39	2.35	0.12
6.	Local FFA Alumni Association	0.73	0.78	0.20
7.	Exhibiting projects	1.92	1.94	0.04
8.	Adult and young farmer classes	1.55	1.69	1.60
9.	The Young Farmer Association	1.33	1.24	0.66
10.	Visits to adult/YF class members	1.29	1.24	0.10
11.	Local vo-ag advisory council	1.45	1.47	0.05
12.	SOEP (production & placement programs)	3.08	3.04	0.13
13.	SOEP records	2.76	2.65	1.32
14.	Visits to potential vo-ag students	1.63	1.78	1.85
15.	Local school duties	0.96	1.12	3.03
16.	Paper work required locally	2.47	2.20	6.48**
17.	Paper work required above local level	2.31	2.35	0.11
18.	Effective PR program	2.47	2.29	1.61
19.	Participation in vo. ed. organizations	2.10	2.00	1.32
20.	Prof. organizations outside vo. ed.	1.06	1.04	0.03
21.	Classes, workshops, prof. development	2.43	2.47	0.13
22.	Keeping current in agriculture	2.55	2.31	4.27**
23.	Coordination with other agencies	1.47	1.35	0.82
24.	Teaching calendars, etc.	2.59	2.71	0.90
25.	Willingly help anyone at anytime	0.71	0.69	0.04
26.	Neatness and organization	2.33	2.39	0.33
27.	Visitng with others	1.73	1.67	0.21
28.	Support all school activities	1.35	1.10	4.27**
29.	Participation in civic organizations	1.35	1.20	2.00
30.	Participation in church activities	2.00	2.06	0.33
31.	Having a nice home	1.88	2.10	1.78
32.	Personal leisure time	2.08	2.14	0.16
33.	Daily family life	2.51	2.82	3.42
34.	Family life on weekends	2.12	2.47	4.79**
35.	Second source of income	2.12	1.98	1.04

N = 49

*Analysis of variance (df=1,48): P<.05 at 4.04, P<.01 at 7.19.
**Significant at the .05 alpha level.

clusion was drawn that the teachers had priorities for their activities. Furthermore, it was concluded that activities related to teaching secondary students were perceived to be of greatest importance, and activities related to home and family life were perceived to be of greater importance than program maintenance, community, and adult teaching activities.

Differences were found between the initital and follow-up ratings of the teachers who responded to the follow-up mailing. Therefore, participation in the program planning workshop was concluded to have caused the teachers to examine and change their priorities.

Discussion

Although limited to four hours in length, the program planning workshop apparently did challenge teachers to examine their priorities. Significant changes were found in the ratings of four activities between the pretest and the posttest. The changes might be attributed to the importance or the severity of the time management problems of teachers of agriculture, or they might be attributed to the high involvement of the teachers in each phase of the workshop. The effectiveness of the workshop was emphasized when the results of the test-retest of the instrument with the pilot study group who did not participate in a workshop was compared to the results of the pretest-posttest of the experimental teacher group. A significantly different rating by the pilot study group was found for only one activity, daily family life. It was rated significantly lower by the pilot group on the retest, but significantly higher on the posttest of the teachers who responded to the follow-up after attending a workshop.

When the outcomes of the study are considered, persons responsible for advising teachers on program operation should be aware of working with individuals to ascertain their priorities as they evaluate potential positions in view of the specific expectations others hold for the job. In addition, group sessions or workshops may be used to assist teachers in setting priorities for activities in operating the local program of vocational agriculture and in making positive adjustments as they strive to live with the job.

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