

1998 AAAE DISTINGUISHED LECTURE: EXPERIENCING AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Roland L. Peterson
University of Minnesota

When I received a call asking if I would give this address, I was deeply honored but somewhat frightened by the thought of what I might share with my colleagues that would be meaningful. I have always viewed this event as one of the significant highlights of the American Association for Agricultural Education's (AAAE) annual conference. It seems that the "mystery speaker"-the distinguished lecturer-always challenges one to reflect on the profession following the conference. I feel we have been richly blessed by an enormous list of distinguished lecturers that began in 1930. Sixty-eight distinguished lecturers with names such as Bradford, Nolan, Field, Byram, Hammonds, Steward, Hamlin, Stewart, Stevens, Sutherland, Deyoe, Deems, Scarborough, Bundy, Snowden, Peterson, McClay, Thompson, Bail, Warmbrod, O'Kelly, Love, Homer, Lee, Crunkilton, Crawford, Nelson, McCracken, McCormick, Miller, Newcomb, Shinn, Curtis, Kahler, Terry, and Hillision. All 68 have left a unique and lasting impression on our profession. Surely, the name Roland Peterson does not fit in the same company as these distinguished leaders.

Every lecturer over these many, many years has left us with a message that stirred the profession, provided a basis for debate, and left an influence on our thinking. They each have made a difference in our lives. However, more than what these individuals gave in their addresses was further marked by their lives and careers. They have all left us with a set of values and beliefs and a contribution that has made a mark on our profession. As I reflect on the lives of many of these leaders, I am deeply thankful and impressed with the philosophies and vision of these individuals. In their unique manner, they have been able to glean from education and from the

agricultural, food and natural resource systems those qualities and fundamental principles that have guided the field of agricultural education. They created and sustained a discipline. Personally, I believe each has moved us in a particular direction to where we are today. I feel deeply honored to be listed with this distinguished group. However, I also feel totally inadequate to be labeled "distinguished." I hope we never forget the value and contributions of each of these distinguished lecturers.

In thinking about what I might have to contribute, I found the task requires considerable time to think and reflect. Unfortunately, I have almost no time to do either in my present role.

Today, I will have to admit that my thoughts were influenced by a Bible study I am currently involved in leading. The study comes from the work of two men, Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King entitled "Experiencing God." This study has given me a new view of God and His work. It has also given me a new view on how one can experience God. In the Blackaby and King (1997) work, they focus their work around "Seven Realities of Experiencing God." I will not take us into Blackaby and Kings' work, but as I began to reflect on their work, I was struck with the idea there are also at least "Seven Realities of Experiencing Agricultural Education." At times, my seven realities will parallel the Blackaby and King realities, whereas others will have no connection. In my view, I would like to think anyone who completes the Blackaby and King study will experience God in a deeper and more insightful manner. Hopefully, our discussion today will have us view Agricultural Education in a deeper and more realistic manner as we draw to the close of this century.

Reality #1: Agricultural Education is always functioning around you.

I would like to think every subject matter discipline in education can make this claim. Clearly mathematics surrounds us, the physical and biological sciences touch us daily, communication is always around us . . . our ability to read, write, speak and compute impact our effectiveness in all phases of life. The world of social studies impacts our thoughts and world view. Languages impact us, more than we'd like to admit; music, drama and the arts also impact us in every aspect of our daily living. Finally, family consumer sciences, the world of business and industrial technology are a part of life and workplace experiences. What about agricultural education? The food, fiber and natural resources touch our lives everyday. Agriculture touches us daily throughout our entire lives. Yes, it is clear that agricultural education is always functioning around us.

However, if this is true, then why isn't agricultural education being experienced by all students across the country? Why does agricultural education seem to be missing from any priority list as an essential component of the school system?

If one were to examine classrooms across the country, I am confident topics and illustrations using food and farming illustrations may be a part of nearly every teachers' lessons. Everyone seems to have an opinion and view of agriculture-it's farming. Their view may be completely erroneous. However, the use of agriculture is interesting and readily identified with "Old MacDonald." Yes, it surrounds us but its reputation in terms of importance when compared to the liberal arts, engineering, medicine, and law, is not viewed as an essential.

Interestingly, from man's earliest times, education regarding the raising of food and fiber was a parent-to-child responsibility. In some cultures around the world, it was women's work;

in other cultures, it was exclusively for men. Eventually, according to True (1929), education to meet the actual needs of human life gave attention to nature and practical life. In the 1500's and 1600's. True (1929) indicated that education including agriculture represented "a complete and generous education." True (1929) also indicated that Rosseau in the 1700's held that educational material should be "the fact and phenomena of nature." Pestalozzi in the 1700's and 1800's used agriculture as a practical scheme to teach his children and in a school for the poor. True (1929) also revealed that von Fellenberg in the early to mid-1800's conducted schools using gardens and farm work with instruction in science related to agriculture. Clearly across Europe the development of natural sciences related to agriculture grew throughout the 1700's and 1800's. It was not uncommon during this era to find modern chemistry linked to farms. Agricultural scientists, botanists, and geologists were studying agricultural crops and soils as a basis for their research and teaching. It was apparent in these early years that schools focused on the application of sciences to the common purposes of life. In the early 1800's True (1929) reported that Amos Eaton lectured during the summer of 1824 in western New York regarding Rensselaer Institute. His message was "to qualify teachers for instructing the sons and daughters of farmers of farmers and mechanics in the application of experimental chemistry, philosophy and natural history to agriculture, domestic economy, the arts and manufactures . . . "

Clearly, throughout this period of time agricultural societies were also promoting and moving the idea that the study of agriculture was to be a normal part of the school system and educational institution.

Considerable evidence is available which speaks of agricultural education being an integral part of the elementary school in the late 1800's and early 1900's. According to True (1929) instruction focused on (1) object teaching, (2) nature study, and (3) school gardens. It was clear

that observations and comparisons were expected of elementary students regarding cultivated and wild plants, trees, insects, and wild and domestic animals, soils in their gardens (school or home). The passage of the Putnam Act in the early 1900's required schools to have 5-10 acres of land to conduct agriculturally oriented experiments. Hamlin (1962) suggested "that if agricultural education is to have permanent status in public schools it must contribute to two basic purposes for the public schools: (1) to help hold together a nation threatening to fall apart and produce a special kind of citizen able to participate in a new form of government, and (2) to help all Americans to become all that they might become." (pg. 14)

He pointed out these were the accepted reasons for public schools. One appeared to have career or vocational focus, the other simply meant the development of people. Hamlin strongly promoted the position that the subject of agricultural education had a very legitimate role in the public schools.

Before Hamlin's time, Bricker (1914) seemed to summarize this reality by stating "that the subject of agriculture, properly taught, as an efficient means to employ in the formal education of the youth is now coming to be generally recognized." Agricultural materials may be employed in the education of children quite advantageously. He further stated that agriculture is both physical and biological science and that alone is a double reason for its place in the program of studies. He also pushed the desirability of agricultural education as a subject because it is both vocational and cultural. It may contribute to economic efficiency as well as a liberal subject.

Reality #2: Agricultural Education is very real and very personal.

One needs to only obtain testimonials of students who have experienced a full agricultural education program to observe that they have had

a very real and personal experience. From the time a student has had their first experience in a course, or in an experience with an FFA activity, or the development of a supervised agricultural experience they will likely have a positive experience. Yes, for some the experience may not have been memorable, but for many it has been life-changing. Alumni of our programs frequently give positive testimony to the wonderful experiences they have had in agricultural education. Most school experiences have been lost in their memory but the experiences in agricultural education remain. We recently had a piece of legislation move through the Minnesota legislature. I am confident the positive agricultural education experiences of a state senator years earlier served as strong motivation to pass the bill. The senator simply saw the value of his experience and wanted other young people to have this type of educational opportunity.

The thrill of the first national convention continues to be a driving force in my memory. To think one could be a part of something so impressive, never seems to go away. I'm confident the nearly 50,000 students, parents, school administrators, agribusiness executives, plus a host of guests who attend the 71st National FFA Convention would have to say they were deeply impressed. Countless numbers of young people have reflected on their experiences and have set goals and made commitments that will impact them for the rest of their lives.

The Local Program of Success (1997) materials present the idea that the program of agricultural education can focus on instruction based on interests, can provide "real-world" connections, can engage students across "all" ability levels. Agricultural education programs become an advocate for students and help them become engaged in their communities. Clearly, agricultural education provides a unique context for learning. It is also program in which students gain life-long abilities and competence.

As we reflect on our personal experiences in Agricultural Education (I have about 42 years of reflection) it is evident that agricultural education is very real and personal. As a result of an agricultural education experience, as Hamlin suggested in his purpose for the public schools, students will become those special kinds of citizens motivated to become all they can be.

Reality #3: Agricultural Education invites everyone to become involved.

One of the greatest frustrations that confronts beginning as well as experienced teachers is that agricultural education represents an enormously broad and flexible dimension of education. The "Local Program Success" (1997) publication also stated that successful teachers "engage all students across all ability levels." As one may think back to the early years from the 1500's through the 1800's, there must have been something about the discipline of agricultural education that served as a meaningful attraction for students. What observations might one find in the work of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, or von Fellenberg that caused them to see the value of using gardens, conducting experiments on real plants and animals or performing work on a farm which resulted in a positive impact on student learning. It is interesting to note that they taught their own children and those who apparently were labeled as poor. The practicality of natural science associated with agriculture could readily get all students engaged in their learning. It was simply a meaningful experience.

Hamlin (1962) stated that agriculture is one of the newest subjects in the public schools. He further stated that there are many who believe that agricultural education has no place in the public schools. He also pointed out that adults and school-age students are all considered to be an automatic part of an agricultural education program.

There are still many today who believe that agricultural education has no place in the public school system. In fact, I would suggest that we all have colleagues in our universities in agriculture and education who have no idea what agricultural education represents. Most still carry some idea that it is merely farmer education. Agricultural Education can be natural science; it can be enormously complimentary to biological and physical science. It can compliment nearly every discipline in the school. It has been my experience after working with the science teachers in a Minneapolis Middle School for more than 10 years, that animals and crops and mechanical things make science a very real experience for students who may have no interest in school, no interest in study and no interest in agriculture. However, because of experiences that are real, they often show, for the first time, an interest in doing something.

In my view, we have two approaches in our field of incorporating science into our programs. One approach is that science is simply being integrated into agricultural education courses. That seems to be clearly evident in materials being published today. Another approach is a team approach with science and agricultural education teachers working together. In this situation, science teachers provide basic knowledge and the teachers of agricultural education provide the real applied or doing knowledge. In my view, we have opportunities to become more involved in all the disciplines in schools more than ever before. Agricultural Education can offer a positive experience for all students.

Reality #4: Agricultural Education speaks of successes in the lives of students but remains a discipline that is virtually unknown.

It is quite apparent that executives in all of the major agribusiness firms across the country would likely speak very highly of agricultural education. Their evidence of support is readily reflected in donations of \$7,200,000 to the National FFA

Foundation and, it is my understanding, an additional \$5000,000 to the new National FFA Center during the past year. It appears that sum of support is something one might call significant. These corporations must feel there is significant quality and success occurring in Agricultural Education programs across the country to merit their substantial financial support. Why is it then that in most states only half or less of the school districts have a program of Agricultural Education. In Minnesota, we have programs in 42% of the school districts. Also, in times of financial crisis, why is a program of agricultural education often the first one to be eliminated? We clearly can relate to and impress the food and fiber industry. We struggle a bit in impressing the natural resources areas. (They seem to feel a close connection to the sciences rather than agriculture). However, I propose we have not impressed the school administrators and those responsible for school policy. The program is not one that holds the most important program role in colleges of education or agriculture. I'd like to think we are gaining some respect. However, in jockeying for faculty positions, we are rarely able to impress department heads to support our positions.

In most universities, what is the status of the agricultural education program? How are programs viewed by college deans? How are we viewed by our university colleagues? Are we central to the efforts of the college? I would like to think we are making progress. For some reason, we are being able to replace faculty and are starting to gain a measure of respect.

Reality number four states that we can produce impressive evidence that our students are successfully employed at graduation, have strong leadership qualities and quality citizens. However, despite the successes, we are viewed as not the most critical discipline in school. Could we be the unknown discipline?

Reality #5: Agricultural Education has an open invitation to take its place in the school

system but is facing a crisis of beliefs and actions.

This reality points to the fact that we can have a place in education at the K-12 and 13- 16 levels of education. However, we have difficulty determining what our role is and the direction we are headed. As one looks across the programs at the high school level, it is evident we may be associated with science education, vocational education, life-work education, work-community-family education, agribusiness education, agricultural science and technology education, agribusiness and natural resources education, occupational education, agriscience and agribusiness education, agriculture and natural resources education, and finally agricultural education. At the university level we are known as professors of agricultural education; agribusiness education; agricultural communication; agricultural mechanics; agricultural education and communication; agricultural education and studies; agriculture and natural resources; agricultural, food and environmental education; agricultural education and experimental statistics; agricultural leadership, education and communication; agricultural extension and adult education; rural sociology; agriscience education; agricultural systems technology and education; and finally, agricultural education.

From our titles, it is evident one could experience a broad range of study within the agricultural education family. At the state supervisory level, we are teamed under a wide range of titles. At the university level, a wide range of programs have been framed under the agricultural education family. Clearly, some university administrators have had a long mission of eliminating the field of agricultural education as well as all the other fields in the old traditional vocational education family. It is also clear we have joined a broad array of subject fields to sustain our programs.

With so much diversity present, what is the future of agricultural education? Do we face a crisis of beliefs and actions? I submit we need to continue the strategic planning effort that has no doubt begun in most states. In the vision 2020 work, most of us have made some major commitments to the future.

I recently experienced a strategic planning effort that was built on a lo-year planning basis. According to Addington (1998), it was pointed out that changes occur so rapidly, 10 years is a maximum time effort for strategic planning.

I would propose we need to think about forming a clear mission statement for our programs. I am aware that many of you have these documents in your strategic plan. I'd have to admit we had one but no one could recite it and it never made a difference in our work. According to Saffold (1994), a mission statement answers the question: "Why do we exist?" A mission statement should (1) be broad in scope but easily understood; (2) be easy to memorize by everyone in the organization, and (3) should give clear direction for our existence. A few years ago we developed a mission statement. Frankly, ours was so lengthy and involved, I could never recite it. It was also so loaded with educational language, no lay person or student could ever tell you what it meant.

Once we have a mission statement, we need a set of core values (not to exceed 10). Core values answer the question, "Who are we?" Core values (1) do not change, (2) serve to stabilize our organization, (3) are uncompromising principles by which we tend to function, and (4) are critically important because we do what we value.

The third aspect of strategic planning is to identify a list of statements that mark a "preferred future" for an organization. Every organization has a future; however, what is our preferred future? The preferred future statements answer the question, "Where are we going?" This preferred

future becomes (1) our vision, and (2) may change every decade (or half decade).

Once one has completed these three steps, a strategic initiative plan needs to be implemented. The first step in this strategic planning process is to conduct a "status analysis." A status analysis answers the question, "How does our current situation compare with our preferred future?" Once this comparison has been made, major issues need to be identified. This step answers the questions, "What are the barriers to reaching our preferred vision" and "What must be put in place if we are to reach that vision?" These are usually developed in the form of questions. The final step is referred to as strategic initiative development. This step answers the question, "What do we need to do next in order to reach our preferred future?" In the next 12-36 months what must be undertaken? Leadership must always answer the question, "What happens next?" I would like to share a "DRAFT" version of a mission statement, a set of core values, a preferred future and an analysis of our program in Minnesota. Please note this is ours; it is designed for our situation. It is a draft-this is our eighth draft version. It will likely be adjusted a bit more . . .

Mission Statement of the Agricultural, Food and Environmental Education Division University of Minnesota, Twin Cities Campus

Our mission is to prepare quality agricultural, food and environmental educators and leaders through teaching, research and service.

Core Values of the Division

1. Students

We value each student enrolled in our undergraduate, graduate and continuing education programs. Students are the basis for the existence of our programs and merit our full support and attention.

2. **Diversity**
We value diversity in the thoughts, cultures, origins and creeds of our students and faculty. Diversity makes us innovative and open to change.
3. **Excellence**
We value excellence and professionalism in our work. In our endeavors in research, teaching and service, we seek to build the capacity and prestige of our students and our profession.
4. **Flexibility**
We value programs that are flexible, adaptable and serve the needs of our students and stakeholders.
5. **Partnerships**
We value partnerships with stakeholders across the University, in various Twin Cities Campus departments and colleges as well as at Crookston and other coordinate campuses. Also, we seek partnerships with various MnSCU institutions in the state and region. Public schools, agribusiness and industry organizations are also valuable partners vital to our dynamic and vibrant program.
6. **The Context of Agriculture**
We value the context of agriculture. Teaching and learning in all phases of education (K-postsecondary) can be enhanced by the social, economic, scientific and technical connections to food, fiber, environment and natural resources.
7. **Disciplined Inquiry**
We value disciplined inquiry about and in education. The application of knowledge of meanings, means and ends improves not only the total teaching and learning process, it is vital to the future of humankind and our programs. Reflective practice is central to professional education roles.
8. **Ethical Professionalism**
We value ethical professionalism in all our relationships with students, colleagues, partners and stakeholders.
9. **Stakeholder Advice and Input**
We value stakeholder advice and input for our programs through formal and informal processes. Advice and input are critical in maintaining dynamic AFEE programs in a rapidly changing world with increasing technological and human relationship needs.
10. **Service**
We value outreach to clientele groups, partners and stakeholders.
11. **Whole Persons**
We value, as whole persons, those individuals served by our graduates more than the potential work roles they may be preparing to assume or currently occupy.
12. **Scholarship**
We value scholarship that knows and uses research and informs the profession. Scholarship emerges from research and informs our teaching. Further, we value contributing to research and drawing from it.

Preferred Future for the Division

By 2009 . . .

1. **Teacher Preparation**
We envision a premier agricultural, food and environmental teacher education program that prepares and serves teachers. Educators prepared for grades 5- 12, urban and non-urban teaching and learning environments; adult farm business management educators, postsecondary agricultural education and agricultural extension education. Our vision includes 40-50 students entering the licensure program and 30-40 graduating each year. The teacher licensure cadre of students will number

between 150-200 students.

2. Agricultural Leadership Training and Development

We envision a viable agricultural leadership, training and development program that annually prepares 20 graduates for employment in agribusiness, agri-industry and natural resource industry settings.

3. New Major: Agricultural Systems and Studies Major

We envision an agricultural systems and studies major which prepares students for work roles in production agriculture, agribusiness, agri-industry and natural resources.

4. Program Flexibility

We envision a flexible undergraduate program that provides alternative paths for students completing their degree studies with opportunities for dual licensure in life science education and industrial technology education.

5. Agricultural Literacy

We envision a University of Minnesota agricultural literacy education certificate/program for practicing K-12 educators, preservice teacher education programs within the University of Minnesota, MnSCU and private teacher preparation programs across Minnesota. Our program vision includes agricultural literacy workshops, institutes and experiences for all K- 12 teachers in the state.

6. International Agricultural Education

We envision a program pertinent to the educational needs of international agricultural educators and domestic students with international work-role goals.

7. Graduate Education

We envision a graduate program that annually produces four premier doctoral graduates with

an agricultural, food and environmental teacher education specialization, four premier doctoral graduates with extension education and other educational goals, Masters of Education and Masters of Arts programs that provide relevant and meaningful education for professional AFEE educators.

8. Research and Development

We envision a million-dollar research and development agenda that is focused on the teaching and learning processes in and about agricultural, food and environmental education.

9. Technology-enhanced Education

We envision a technology-enhanced educational program that utilizes state-of-the-art instructional technology media for classroom and distance education settings.

10. Cooperation and Collaboration

We envision a program that maintains cooperative and collaborating agreements with stakeholders within the University, MnSCU institutions and across the region.

Barriers to Reaching the Preferred Future

1. Students

We do not have a sufficient number of students in teacher education to serve current needs.

2. Graduates

There can be no expansion of Agricultural Education programs in Minnesota schools without three to four times more graduates in teacher education.

3. Agricultural Leadership Training and Development

There is no leadership for the Agricultural Leadership Training and Development program.

4. **Agricultural Systems and Studies**
There has been no rationale or proposal outlining the need for an Agricultural Systems and Studies major.
5. **Perception of Location**
The Twin Cities metropolitan area location of the AFEE program is viewed negatively by some students and positively by other students. The positive features need to be clearly presented.
6. **Faculty**
We do not have enough faculty to adequately support our proposed program growth.
7. **Research Agenda**
We do not have a thematically oriented research agenda, nor are there any financial resources to support a research agenda.
8. **Recruitment**
We do not have a long-range recruitment plan for the undergraduate and graduate programs.
9. **College Support**
The College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Science (COAFES) and the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) have not made a full commitment nor provided financial resources to support this vision.
10. **Scholarships**
There is a shortage of scholarship monies to support quality students interested in this program.
11. **International Students**
We do not have resources nor a well-established plan to attract international students.
12. **Organizational Connections**
The program is not well connected to various agricultural commodity support groups, educational agencies, or the broad range of teacher groups.
13. **Graduate Program**
The graduate program does not have a strong reputation.
14. **Partnerships**
Cooperative plans have not been developed to enhance partnerships.
15. **Technology**
The program does not have resources or staff prepared for technology assisted instruction.
16. **Agricultural Literacy**
We have not established a reputation or appropriate connections for an agricultural literacy program to influence all K-12 teachers and students across the state.
17. **Advisory Group**
We have not had an advisory group to provide input to the AFEE program on a regular basis.
18. **Teacher Education Program**
The teacher education program is not consistent across courses with a common theoretical framework nor is it connected to science education or industrial technology.

Reality #6. You must make major adjustments in your programs to join Agricultural Education and what it is doing.

In the Blackaby and King study, I have struggled with understanding the idea of making adjustments to the will of God. I find myself saying, what adjustments have I made in my life?
As I thought about reality number 6, I thought about what adjustments do we need to make to experience Agricultural Education and what it may be doing. I have identified a series of adjustments I feel are essential.

Adjustment #1: We must graduate at least three to four times more students than we are today. If we have 10 – 15 graduates today in our program, during the next two to three years we will need 30 – 40 graduates per year. With the present supply of teachers in agricultural education, we can barely maintain our current programs. It makes little sense to even propose the initiation of new programs at the middle school level, or encourage schools to expand their program to include agricultural education when there is no chance they can hire a qualified, quality teacher.

Adjustment #2: We must find new means of preparing agricultural education majors. I have become convinced we cannot recruit enough students to have a sufficient supply. We need partners. In Minnesota, we are creating a series of 2 + 2 programs with several community and technical colleges in our state. We are also creating a 3 + 1, a 4 + 1 and 4 + 0 set of options with the University of Minnesota, Crookston Campus. In each of these partnerships, we will consider every student admitted to the program in a partner institution as enrolled in Agricultural Education at the University of Minnesota, St. Paul Campus. These students will not be considered transfer students; they will be our students and will simply change campuses after two years. We can never attract enough students in our traditional system. We must develop partnerships across our state.

Adjustment #3: We must find ways to attract students to the major. Special Agricultural Education scholarships of \$2,000 or more must be made available to attract quality students. Other fields seem to find ways to offer attractive support programs such as fully funded degree programs. We need to call on our alumni and share the vision. We need endowed scholarship funds to support students. Frankly, we have not maintained close connections with our alumni.

Adjustment #4: We must set our expectations at a high level. Demands on teachers today require quality, flexible, enthusiastic graduates who can teach. For too long we have had to simply accept everyone who chose the “Ag Ed” major. Today, at the University of Minnesota, we are instituting a g.p.a. of 2.75. We are also attempting to raise our expectations in terms of physical and biological science expectations. We need to identify quality students in high schools and then pursue them so they join our major. An Agricultural Education major cannot have a reputation of being less costly and easy.

Adjustment #5: We must establish alternative licensure programs. First, we must have teachers capable of being licensed in more than one subject area. For some of you, this is not a problem. For some of us, this is nearly impossible because we happen to have disciplines that have established strong licensure requirements. With the implementation of a performance based graduation system in Minnesota’s public school system, hopefully teacher integration across disciplines will become a reality. However, obtaining endorsements in an additional field will likely require considerable debate and adjustments.

Second, we need to consider attracting quality employees from agribusiness to join us in teaching and in training and development activities. This adjustment will take considerable work convincing high-salaried individuals to move into the interesting work of teaching students whose first interest is to “fool around.” It will also require offering degree programs with unusual time schedules.

Adjustment #6: We must design our programs to serve a broader group of students. It is fairly evident that a 5 – 12 license is a common new requirement. Agricultural Education at the middle school is common for some states; for others, it’s a new arena. The preparation of teachers for adult farm management education in

Minnesota is still a reality. Yes, adult farm business management continues. Teacher preparation for the adult farm management teacher education program requires some new adjustments as well. Also, we have never entered the training and development arena. It may be past time.

Adjustment #7: We must prepare teachers to serve a much more diverse student population. With urban (core metropolitan cities) agricultural education programs emerging, plus populations of students with language and reading problems, we need to adjust our programs meet a diverse population of students. It is not a compliment to traditional agricultural education when urban teachers say we need our own organization. The current agricultural education program apparently at all levels is simply not serving teachers in these unique programs.

Adjustment #8: We must establish national standards for our programs. For those of us facing NCATE reviews, we are not an integral part of the review because no folios are required. We really have no standards to have our programs evaluated against. What are our thematic standards? What are our disciplinary standards and our programmatic standards? What should 5 – 12 learners be able to know and be able to do in agricultural education? What should learners know about the disciplines of animal science, plant science (agronomy and horticulture), agricultural mechanical technology, natural resource management, agribusiness, economics and food science? Finally, what programmatic standards guide all of us affiliated with the American Association for Agricultural Education? We are now functioning under the INTASC standards for licensure. The licensure requirements today in Minnesota require teachers seeking a license to prove competence in the following 10 standard areas: (1) Subject Matter, (2) Student Learning, (3) Diverse Learners, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Learning Environment, (6) Communication, (7) Planning Instruction, (8) Assessment, (9) Reflection and

Professional Development, and (10) Collaboration, Ethics and Relationships. What indicators have we agreed upon that teachers should possess to teach agricultural education? Reality says that if we are to be a credible discipline, we need standards of performance for teacher education.

In my view, we can no longer simply select courses offered by various subject matter fields. We need “special courses” designed for agricultural education majors in animal science, the plant sciences, the natural resources, agribusiness and economics, food science and mechanical technology. If we are standards-based, we will need to have assurance that our graduates can meet new licensure rules. Our colleagues in agriculture will have to provide courses that meet national standards. Our colleagues in agriculture must be abreast of the concepts and goals being addressed by the science education profession. They must design special courses for our majors that address those themes, concepts and goals.

Reality #7: You must have experience in agricultural education to accomplish this work.

Who will make changes in our programs? I am confident your college dean has ideas about how to change agricultural education. Many of us are finding the status quo does not impress the dean. We cannot make change, however, just to make change. I am convinced that many of us will soon find those outside of this family making changes in what is, or should be, agricultural education.

In Minnesota, we have had a very supportive Dean. His concept of agricultural education, however, was different from some of us with a lifetime invested in this program. His idea of a new agricultural education was to engage people outside the profession. His action showed that he felt persons totally unfamiliar with this discipline could best give it a better direction. I hope I am not afraid to be engaged in “outside the box” thinking. However, our thinking must also be

realistic. It must carry a reputation that garners respect from those in education and agribusiness who recognize quality and realism. This program of agricultural education was built on some very sound principles of education. I still marvel at the uniqueness of this program. Our early leaders were solidly grounded in educational philosophy. We must not lose the quality concepts that have made us a unique discipline. Personally, I believe the Smith-Hughes Act took us on a course in education so totally focused on skills and separatism that we lost the full value of the original agricultural education discipline described earlier in this paper. Dewey's perspective may have served agricultural education far better. Under the Smith-Hughes Act, we became a separated program that was "outside" the core disciplines. In our positioning today, I hope we do not compromise our discipline and allow those outside the field to decide our future. Our discipline can be enormously attractive. The contextual learning aspect of our program could thrust into the center of education today. As we search for new professors, are we insisting they have a minimum level of experience in the discipline? Hopefully this idea has not become an outmoded philosophy.

In closing, I am reminded of a story of a little boy in a rural small town who heard a circus was coming to town. According to Swanson (1983), he saved his money so that he could go to the circus. Before the circus arrived in town, he had enough money so he bought a ticket in advance of the event. Finally the day came when the circus arrived. The little guy was very excited and was ready for the big event. He took his ticket and headed into town. As he came to town, he took a seat on the curb and watched the animals, the clowns and all of the excitement. As the event came to a close, he gave his ticket to a clown. When it was over he went home and told his dad all that he had seen. His dad wondered why he was home so soon because he knew attending the circus would require a lot of time. After hearing this story, his dad said, "Son, you didn't see the

circus; all you saw was the parade."

Colleagues, we have been doing teacher education in Agricultural Education for 86 years in Minnesota and probably for more years in your state. Today, I believe we have a wonderful opportunity to be in the main event. I hope we will not settle for watching the parade. We need to take charge of our discipline.

I hope the seven realities of experiencing agricultural education will help us all think about the discipline of agricultural education. However, as we enter the main event, we need to make adjustments before we can totally experience the full benefits of this discipline. Hopefully, I have challenged you to think more deeply and thoughtfully regarding our discipline.

References

Addington, T. (February 20-21, 1998). A seminar on leadership training. Bloomington, MN: The Evangelical Free Church of America.

Blackaby, H. T. & King, C. V. (1997). Experiencing God. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman.

Bricker, G. (1914). Agricultural education for teachers. Cincinnati, OH: American Book Company. (Originally printed in Great Britain: Garland Armor Bricker.)

Hamlin, H. H. (1962). Public school education in agriculture. Danville, IL: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, Inc.

National Council for Agricultural Education: National FFA Organization. (1997). A guide to local program success. Alexandria, VA: Author.

National Council for the Social Studies. (1997). NCATE curriculum guidelines. Washington, DC: Author.

Saffold, G. (1994). Strategic planning for Christian organizations. Fayetteville, AR: Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges.

Swanson, J. (1983). Newsletter article. Parables Etc. 3, 10.

True, A. C. (1929). A history of agricultural education in the United States 1785-1925 United States Department of Agriculture Miscellaneous Publication No. 36. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office.