

**A Comparison of the Attitudes of School Superintendents,
Agriculture Teachers, Advisory Council Chairpersons,
Vocational Agricultural Graduates, and Their Employers,
of the Nebraska Vocational Agriculture Core Curriculum**

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During the academic year 1976-77, a new Vocational Agriculture Core curriculum was implemented in Nebraska (Nebraska, 1977). This new curriculum, patterned from the Oklahoma Vocational Agriculture Core Curriculum, was prepared at the University of Nebraska during the summer of 1976 (Oklahoma, 1974). During the 1976-77 academic year, the Core Curriculum was implemented through district workshops for vocational agriculture teachers.

The Problem and Objectives

By the end of the 1980-81 school year, the Core Curriculum had been in place and utilized in Nebraska for four years. The problem in this study was to assess the attitudes of five different groups toward the use of the Nebraska Vocational Agriculture Core Curriculum; namely school superintendents, vocational agriculture teachers, vocational advisory council chairpersons, vocational agriculture graduates, and their employers. More specifically, the problem was to compare the attitudes of each of these five groups, between schools where vocational agriculture teachers indicated they used the Core Curriculum less than 50% of the time in their program and in schools where vocational agriculture teachers indicated they used the Core Curriculum more than 50% of the time in their program.

Procedure

1. A list was compiled of 77 Nebraska secondary schools in which vocational agriculture teachers indicated they were using the Nebraska Vocational Agriculture Core Curriculum in their local program.
2. Teachers from 24 of the 77 schools indicated they used the Core Curriculum less than 50% of the time in their instructional program, and teachers from 53 of the 77 schools indicated they used the Core Curriculum 50% or more time in their instructional program.
3. Ten schools were randomly selected from each of two groups of schools:

Group 1: Schools where agriculture teachers reported they used the Nebraska Vocational Agriculture Core Curriculum less than 50% of the time in their instructional programs in vocational agriculture.

Group 2: Schools where agriculture teachers reported they used the Nebraska Vocational Agriculture Core Curriculum 50% or more time in their instructional program in vocational agriculture.

4. Agriculture teachers from the 20 schools were asked to furnish the author with the names and mailing addresses of all 1981 vocational agriculture graduates, and the names and mailing addresses of employers of all the 1981 graduates who were employed half-time or more. Twenty employed vocational agriculture graduates were then randomly selected from those employed in each group of 10 schools. The employers of these graduates were also selected. Table 1 shows the number of schools in the populations, number in the two samples, and the number of employed graduates and employers in the populations, and samples.
5. A 13 item questionnaire, designed to assess the attitudes of the five groups previously identified, was developed with the help of a jury from the Nebraska State Department of Education, University of Nebraska Agriculture Education Department, and Nebraska Vocational Agriculture Association. The questionnaire was pilot-tested with five vocational agriculture teachers and five school superintendents not involved in the study.
6. The revised questionnaire was mailed to the school superintendent, vocational agriculture teacher, and vocational advisory council chairperson in each of the twenty schools. Questionnaires were also mailed to the 40 1981 vocational agriculture graduates and their employers selected from the 20 schools. Two follow-up reminders and one telephone reminder were used in the data collection process, each activity being one week apart. Responses were received from 100% of the school administrators and agriculture teachers. A 90% response was received from advisory council chairpersons, and 70% response from the vocational agriculture graduates and employers.
7. One-way analysis of variance tests with alpha set at .05, were calculated to determine if significant differences existed among the response groups of school superintendents, agriculture teachers, vocational advisory council chairpersons, vocational agriculture graduates, and employers within each of the two groups of 10 schools. The two groups of schools were based on percent of time agriculture teachers said they used the Core Curriculum in their agriculture programs. A two tailed t test, with alpha set at .05, was also calculated between the means of each response group, across the two groups of schools. Duncans Multiple Range Test was used to determine significant differences within groups.

Table 1

Populations and Samples of Schools, Graduates, and Employers from Schools Using the Nebraska Vocational Agriculture Core Curriculum

Group of schools	Number of schools		Number of Vo Ag graduates		Number of employers	
	Popu- lation	Sample	Popu- lation	Sample	Popu- lation	Sample
Use Core Curriculum less than 50% of time in vo ag curriculum	24	10	44	20	44	20
Use Core Curriculum 50% or more of the time in the vo ag curriculum	53	10	76	20	76	20
TOTAL	77	20	120	40	120	40

Findings and Conclusions

1. Vocational agriculture teachers from both groups of schools had reviewed the Teacher Core Curriculum, superintendents had read or heard a news release, and vocational agriculture graduates had heard discussion of the Core Curriculum. Advisory council chairpersons in schools using the core 50% or more time had read the Core Curriculum topics, while other groups had not read a news release, reviewed nor heard any discussion of the Core Curriculum.
2. There was considerable disagreement among superintendents, graduates, and employers concerning the proportion of time the Core Curriculum was used, with many respondents indicating they did not know the proportion of time the Core Curriculum was used in the local agriculture program.
3. In schools where the Core Curriculum was used less than 50% of the time, superintendents and agriculture teachers believed the core had a slightly positive influence on program quality, while the advisory council chairpersons, graduates, and employers saw no influence on program quality. In schools where the Core Curriculum was used 50% or more of the time, superintendents, agriculture teachers, advisory council chairpersons and graduates believed a slightly positive influence, while employers believed the core had a slightly negative influence on program quality.

4. Superintendents, advisory council chairpersons, vocational agriculture graduates, and employers in both groups of schools had little or no involvement in making the decision about which units from the Nebraska Core Curriculum would be used in the local agriculture program.
5. Superintendents in both groups of schools and advisory council chairpersons in schools where the Core Curriculum was used more than 50% of the time believed some information was given vocational agriculture students about the Core Curriculum. Vocational agriculture teachers in schools where the Core Curriculum was used less than 50% of the time indicated students were informed very little about the core, while agriculture teachers in schools where the core was used 50% or more indicated agriculture students were given some information about the Core Curriculum. The response groups of advisory council chairpersons in schools which used the Core Curriculum less than 50% of the time and vocational agriculture graduates and employers, from all schools studied, believed vocational agriculture students were given very little information about the Core Curriculum or informed to a very limited extent.
6. Vocational agriculture teachers in schools where the Nebraska Vocational Agriculture Core Curriculum was used 50% or more of the time believed the core was of greater practical use than did vocational agriculture teachers in schools where the core was used less than 50% of the time. Superintendents in both groups of schools and advisory council chairpersons in schools where the core was used 50% or more of the time believed the Core Curriculum was of some practical use.
7. Superintendents and advisory council chairpersons in schools where the Nebraska Core Curriculum was used 50% or more of the time tended to believe the Core Curriculum was a little better than the local curriculum prior to the introduction of the Core Curriculum. Vocational agriculture teachers in both groups of schools rated the Core Curriculum the same when compared to the curriculum in use prior to using the Core Curriculum.
8. Advisory council chairpersons in schools where the Core Curriculum was used 50% or more of time tended to believe the advisory council had some input into the decisions concerning which units of the Core Curriculum would be included in the local vocational agriculture curriculum. The input, however, was not based on a systematic review of the Core Curriculum. Superintendents and agriculture teachers in both groups of schools believed the vocational advisory council had little input into the decisions concerning which units of the Core Curriculum should be included in the local vocational agriculture program.
9. Superintendents and agriculture teachers from both groups of schools, and graduates of schools where the Core Curri-

culum was used 5% or more of the time tended to believe the Core Curriculum had a slight influence on the employment of high school graduates.

10. All response groups in both groups believed the student core curriculum materials should have some potential use in the local vocational agriculture program.

Recommendations

1. Agriculture teachers need to develop program activities which will inform school staff, vocational agriculture students, the vocational advisory council, and the community about the use of the *Nebraska Vocational Agriculture Core Curriculum* in the local program of vocational agriculture.
2. Vocational education advisory councils should have significant involvement in making recommendations regarding which units from the *Nebraska Vocational Agriculture Core Curriculum* should be included in the local vocational agriculture program.
3. Programs of public information about the use of the *Nebraska Vocational Agriculture Core Curriculum* should stress:
 - a) The practicality and usefulness of core materials to the employability of vocational agriculture graduates.
 - b) The potential benefits of the use of core student materials.
 - c) The need for public input through the vocational education advisory council concerning units of the Core Curriculum that should be included in the local vocational agriculture program.

References

Nebraska vocational agriculture core curriculum (1977). Nebraska Vocational Agriculture Curriculum Modification Project, Department of Agriculture Education, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Oklahoma basic core curriculum in vocational agriculture, (1974). Curriculum and Instructional Materials Center, Stillwater, OK: State Department of Vocational and Technical Education