

A MODEL FOR PREPARING SECONDARY TEACHERS OF
AGRICULTURE FOR MINORITY POPULATIONS*

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. . . education is a mirror held against the face of a people; nations may put on blustering shows of strength to conceal political weakness, erect grand facades to conceal shabby backyards, and profess peace while secretly arming for conquest, but how they take care of their children tells unerringly who they are.

--George Z. F. Bereday

Few problems in education have commanded more concern and national attention than has the improvement of education for disadvantaged children and youth. Similarly, few problems in teacher education have proved more elusive of solution even under the impact of widespread effort. Consequently, teacher education institutions offering programs of agricultural education must address immediate attention and critical thought to the following:

1. Will middle class White Anglo Saxon Protestant vocational agriculture teachers accept minority youth and adults enrolled in vocational education in agriculture?
2. How do teacher education institutions prepare and nurture in a vocational agriculture teacher the energy, sensitivity, enthusiasm, intellectual competence and empathy necessary to teach minority youth and adults?

*This article is based upon Dr. Schmitt's Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Agricultural Education, The Ohio State University, 1970. A copy of this model can be obtained by writing to Dr. Schmitt.

3. If student placement is the key ingredient to successful vocational programs in agriculture, will agriculture teachers possess the rapport and expertise to secure realistic job positions for minority youth?
4. What types of professional laboratory experiences, i. e., sensitivity training, simulation, micro-teaching, student teaching and internships will provide the most applicable design for teacher education institutions preparing teachers for minority youth and adults?

The challenge facing teacher education institutions in agriculture is to design professional experiences that will prepare teachers for urban and rural minority children, youth and adults. These teachers will need support and encouragement, successful pre-service and in-service experiences with minority children and youth, and assistance in developing the skills to cope with new pedagogical frustrations. This study dealt with the major elements necessary to accomplish these aforementioned tasks during the pre-service and in-service levels of teacher preparation.

Statement of the Purpose

The central focus of this study was to design a professional teacher education model in agricultural education that will afford an equitable balance between theory and practice for the teacher who will teach children, youth and adults who are members of minority groups.

Specific Objectives

The following specific objectives were identified to facilitate the development of this study:

1. To determine to what extent teacher education institutions in the United States preparing teachers of vocational agriculture are providing special curricular offerings, teaching practicums, community information activities, sensitivity awareness sessions (T-Group Sessions) and workshops during the pre-service, in-service, or post-graduate levels for teachers of minority youth.

2. To analyze on-going teacher preparation models, via existing literature regarding the following: operational objectives; component parts of the curriculum; field experience, i. e., urban and rural settings; seminars in learning, development and measurement; and educational processes for teaching minority youth.
3. To identify the opinions of "experts" concerning optimal teacher preparation programs for minority children, youth and adults. Soliciting expert opinions involved the following representation: (1) foremost educational leaders in teacher preparation for minority people; (2) experts representing the business-industrial complex providing job training for the hard-core unemployed; and (3) established professionals in the disciplines of psychology and sociology.

Procedure: Population and Sample

Initially, the target population for this study was 77 institutions preparing teachers of vocational agriculture in the United States. This survey was conducted to determine the following pertinent information:

1. What type of experience and preparation is provided undergraduate students who will be teaching youth with special needs (i. e., community involvement, special courses, sensitivity awareness sessions, unique field experience settings and seminars?)
2. What type of experience and preparation, at the in-service and post-graduate levels, is provided to increase the teachers' competencies in meeting the real life needs of youth with special needs (i. e., special courses, teaching practicums and workshops in learning, development and measurement?)
3. Is your department currently conducting special research and development projects for teachers of youth with special needs?

Data Source

Four sources provided the major data for this study; (1) review of current literature; (2) survey of the 77 institutions preparing teachers of vocational agriculture; (3) twelve authorities providing leadership for disadvantaged people; and (4) the investigator's involvement, observations and experiences with minority groups.

Opinions, ideas and concepts provided by the national jury of experts were analyzed in terms of: (1) current trends and implications for teachers of minority students; (2) innovative approaches to this situation; and (3) the incorporation of desirable and feasible recommendations and suggestions regarding the proposed preparation models for agricultural teachers of minorities.

Pre-Service Education

In response to the question, "What type of experiences and preparation are provided for undergraduate students who will be teaching minority groups?" the institutions provided the information indicated in Table 1.

Fifty-two out of the 68 institutions responding to the questionnaire reported that no separate preparation or experiences are provided for prospective teachers of minority youth. Selection of courses in other disciplines relevant to minorities is encouraged by four institutions. Visiting on-going programs serving the disadvantaged and the selection of student teaching centers in metropolitan institutions are a part of undergraduate experiences at nine institutions. One institution has conducted joint student-faculty seminars in predominantly Black institutions. Three agricultural education departments are developing new courses of specialization for prospective teachers of minorities.

In-Service and Post-Graduate Education

For those institutions placing major emphasis on teacher preparation for the disadvantaged at the in-service and post-graduate levels, workshops and teacher training insti-

TABLE I
PRE-SERVICE EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS
OF MINORITY STUDENTS

<u>Type of Experiences and Activities</u>	<u>Number of Institutions</u> ¹
No separate experiences from the standard course of study	52
Students elect courses in other disciplines	4
Students visit on-going programs serving the disadvantaged	3
Student teaching centers for students with special needs	7
Joint student-faculty seminars in predominantly Black Schools	1
Development of new courses for specialization	3
Total Number of Institutions Responding	68

¹Several institutions reported more than one experience or activity.

tutes have received major attention. However, the data in Table 2 indicates the majority of institutions are providing either limited experience or such preparation is non-existent.

Thirty-five out of the 68 institutions responding to the questionnaire reported that no experiences or activities are being offered for teachers or graduate students for minority populations. Ten institutions have engaged in federally fund-

TABLE 2
IN-SERVICE AND POST-GRADUATE EDUCATION FOR
TEACHERS OF MINORITY STUDENTS

<u>Type of Experiences and Activities</u>	<u>Number of Institutions</u> ¹
No experiences or activities offered	35
Federally funded institutes	10
Post-graduate workshops	9
Graduate and undergraduate courses offered in the department	8
Graduate seminars within the department	3
Individual studies	8
Total Number of Institutions Responding	68

¹Several institutions reported more than one experience.

ed institutes. Post-graduate workshops, graduate and undergraduate courses have been offered by seven institutions. Graduate seminars are available at four institutions. Individual studies are optional at three universities.

Research and Development Projects

Table 3 summarizes responses to the question, "Is your department currently conducting special research and development projects for teachers of youth with special needs?"

TABLE 3
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS FOR
TEACHERS OF MINORITY STUDENTS

<u>Type of Research and Development Projects</u>	<u>Number of Institutions¹</u>
No research or development projects	50
Pilot programs	7
Advanced degree studies	6
Curriculum guides	4
Master teacher training curriculum	1
Evaluation proposals	2
Total Number of Institutions Responding	68

¹Several institutions reported more than one experience.

Fifty of the 68 institutions responding to the questionnaire reported no plans for research or development projects at the present time. Pilot programs are being conducted at seven institutions. Master thesis or doctoral dissertations have either been written or are being researched by five investigators in the broad area of minority populations. Curriculum guides have been developed at four institutions. A masters' teacher training curriculum is offered at one institution. Evaluation proposals are currently underway at two universities.

Conclusions of the Study

The findings of this study imply that the majority of teacher preparation institutions in agricultural education lack the commitment to assist in ameliorating the educational deprivation of minorities. Generally, teacher preparation institutions across the educational maze have not decided to do anything significant about this arduous situation. Three-fourths of the reporting institutions indicated that no separate experiences or activities were offered at the pre-service level; about fifty percent of the institutions provide no in-service or post-graduate experiences or activities; and over seventy percent have no research or development projects. A case in point, teacher preparation institutions in agriculture throughout the Southwest have provided little, if any, leadership in this area when considering that 80 percent of all American Indians, nearly 100 percent of Mexican-Americans and a substantial proportion of Black Americans reside in this geographical region.

Additional conclusions include:

1. Heterogeneity among minority groups exists to the same extent as can be found in other elements of the majority population.
2. Minority children and youth have yearnings, ambitions, untapped potential, worldly interests and family attachments characteristic to any socioeconomic strata of the population.
3. Socioeconomic status, aspirations, attitudes, educational achievement, cultural and social status differ empathically between minority groups.
4. Acceptance, respect, compassion, empathy and understanding represents the central core for effective teaching of minority children and youth.
5. As advocated by the three selected teacher preparation programs for the disadvantaged, the teacher is the most important ingredient in assisting the educational plight of minority children and youth.

6. Social sensitivity training, interdisciplinary approaches, pre-service orientation workshops, professional field experiences, Urban Society seminars, in-service workshops and yearly internship programs are component parts of the described teacher preparation programs for minority youth.
7. Lack of educational commitment, program oriented curricula, conservatism, majority culture administration, inadequate financial base, the middle class Judeo Christian ethic, competition from national priorities, insufficient research, and residual psychological prejudices are reasons given by members of the national jury for education's failure to seize the necessary leadership in ameliorating the educational deprivation of minorities.
8. Recruitment from the ranks of minorities, specialized field internships, activity-oriented curriculums, utilization of citizens committees, early induction in the world of the culturally different, ideological expositions, and the involvement in community agencies are essential activities set forth by members of the national jury for optimal preparation for teachers serving minority children and youth.

Teacher preparation institutions in agricultural education are facing a new urgency in preparing teachers for minority groups. Thus, the following salient features represent a summary of the premises upon which the preparation model for successfully preparing secondary teachers of agriculture for minority populations should be based.

1. Vigorous efforts must be placed on recruiting and selecting teachers from the ranks whom they serve.
2. Professional agricultural teacher preparation curricula must provide a wide array of alternatives.
3. Teacher preparation institutions in agriculture must provide a continuum of educational experiences from entry to retirement.

4. Teacher education in agriculture must prepare the teacher to genuinely utilize parental involvement in developing realistic educational experiences for their children.
5. Early involvement with minority children, youth and adults must be an important element in vocational teacher preparation for students enrolled in agricultural education.
6. Teacher preparation programs in agriculture must be designed so that the teacher has an excellent chance for success.
7. Future vocational teachers in agriculture must become increasingly "person-oriented" and "student-centered."
8. Agricultural teacher preparation must become a cooperative venture between local school districts, state departments of education, industry and community organizations.
9. Teacher education institutions in agriculture must establish state, regional and national councils to insure a political power base from which adequate financing can be secured.
10. Either a four day week or 15 to 20 percent of the minority teachers contractual time should be spent cooperatively with the university, local school district and community in conducting research and/or professional improvement activities.

Until a teacher preparation institution(s) in Agriculture becomes totally committed to the task of preparing teachers for minority children and youth, all efforts to abrogate the educational deprivation of this population will be in vain. This assertion is aptly stated by Beebe, a solicited national jury member, "As a whole, we simply have not made up our minds the cause is worth the effort!"

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