

A FIVE-YEAR FOLLOW UP OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION
GRADUATES WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR IMPROVING
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION EFFORTS

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Introduction

Woodin (1973) reported that the most acute shortages of teachers were in Florida, Virginia, Washington, North Carolina, Georgia, Ohio, and Indiana. He further elaborated that, while an all-time high of 1,759 graduates were qualified, only 54.8 percent of the graduates entered the Agricultural Education teaching profession.

The shortage of teachers in Virginia over the past several years has been critical. This has resulted from the rapid increase in the multiple teacher departments in the State, the influx of vocational programs in community colleges, and the initiating of new programs. Although the exigency of the situation has fostered recruitment campaigns, the shortage of teachers is far from being remedied.

Results

Dr. Woodin's finding that only 54.8 percent of the graduates entered the profession led to a five-year follow-up study of recent graduates at VPI & SU. Table 1 illustrates that 72.5 percent of the VPI & SU graduates in Agricultural Education are engaged in teaching in their major area of preparation. Only 6.4 percent are teaching in fields other than Agricultural Education. Twenty-one percent are employed in fields of work other than education.

TABLE 1
FOLLOW-UP DATA ON AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION GRADUATES

| Year | N | Percentage | | |
|-----------------------|-----|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | | Teaching in Major Field | Teaching in Other Fields ^a | Non-Educ. Fields of Work |
| 1968-69 | 28 | 60.8 | 14.3 | 25.0 |
| 1969-70 | 18 | 83.3 | 5.5 | 11.0 |
| 1970-71 | 20 | 80.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 |
| 1971-72 | 25 | 76.0 | 0.0 | 24.0 |
| 1972-73 | 18 | 66.7 | 0.0 | 33.3 |
| 1968-73 (5-year mean) | 109 | 72.5 | 6.4 | 21.0 |

^aIncludes teaching and administrative positions.

Conclusions

An alternative to a recruitment campaign for teacher trainers is to encourage a higher percentage of their graduates to enter their field of training. It appears that this alternative may be questionable in Virginia, since the State is already considerably above the national average, over a five-year period, for the percentage of its graduates who are teaching Agricultural Education.

The last two years have found no graduates engaged in other fields of teaching. This could be attributed to the surplus of teachers in the areas in which Agricultural Education graduates often seek employment. The higher percentage in the years 1968-70 results from many teachers moving into administrative positions.

The percentage of graduates in non-educational fields of work brought to light some interesting results over the past five years. The majority of this category from 1968-69 to 1970-71 were presently employed in agribusiness. The 1971-72 summary of the graduates revealed that 4 of the 6 in other fields were in the military service.

Four of the six 1972-73 graduates have chosen to continue their education in graduate school. If this trend continues, it may be a justifiable generalization to conclude that the reduction of the threat of induction into the military service will allow graduates to more fully plan their careers, and perhaps graduate school will be an alternative for many.

Summary

The need for more teachers of Agricultural Education is a critical matter. Their unavailability is a stub on the track to program growth. It is a limiting factor to the expansion of existing programs and the initiation of new programs. Remedial steps must be taken to alleviate the situation.

This follow-up study suggests that a disproportionate share of the teachers trained at VPI & SU are entering the profession. Yet, continued efforts must be made to encourage even a greater percentage to enter the profession. Other measures that might be suggested would be renewed recruitment efforts with students, parents, and guidance counselors; contacting community colleges for recruitment purposes; encouraging the local Agricultural Education teachers to place greater emphasis upon recruiting prospective teachers; and those states producing a surplus to encourage greater mobility of their graduates.

Implications for Further Study

The finding of this study, and the resulting inherent problems, would lead to the need for solutions to the following:

- (1) What factors deter prospective students from entering the profession;
- (2) Why do those trained in the profession choose not to enter it;
- (3) What recruitment techniques are effective; and
- (4) What measures can be taken to encourage greater mobility of Agricultural Education graduates?

REFERENCES

Woodin, Ralph J. "Facts on Teacher Supply and Demand in Vocational Agriculture in 1972." The Agricultural Education Magazine, 1973, 45, 286.