

DEMONSTRATION PROGRAMS FOR TRAINING FARM YOUTH
IN NONFARM AGRICULTURAL OCCUPATIONS

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Vocational education in agriculture is faced with a dynamic challenge as it moves to improve and expand programs in vocational agriculture under the Vocational Education Act of 1963. There is an excitement and satisfaction in meeting the new challenge and in conquering a whole new world. The possibilities of developing new programs are too numerous to mention. In light of the "too numerous demands" now and emerging, there will be a tendency to overlook basic and fundamental things in new programs.

Where do demonstration programs fit into the operation of improving and expanding programs? Do they have a place? If so, what is their place?

The 1963 Vocational Education Act provides for, among other things, certain ancillary services and activities to assure quality in all vocational education programs. One ancillary service is research and development -- research and development oriented to developing programs in vocational education to meet the needs of people on a sound basis. Research and development should follow a sequence of actions:

- (1) problem definition (identification)
- (2) research
- (3) program development
- (4) field testing
- (5) dissemination
- (6) implementation.

The Place of Demonstration Programs

Demonstration programs have a definite place in a program of research and development. They can and should become a dynamic force in implementing new programs in nonfarm agricultural occupations and in the many other aspects of vocational education. Their use will be limited by the vision and insight of the leadership in agricultural education. Where do demonstration programs fit into a program of research and development?

Look at the fifth step in the sequence of actions in research and development — dissemination. The demonstration is an excellent means of disseminating information, practices, methods and procedures which which have proven efficient and effective; which have produced good results in certain training programs. The word demonstration means "an act or example of making known by visible means or giving tangible evidence of something; illustration of the practical application of certain methods, procedures or practices." And, with the assumption that the practices and procedures have proven to be effective in producing intended outcomes.

As a rule, demonstration programs should be set up in schools following a pilot period — after certain organizational structures, methods and practices have been tested, modified and good operational procedures have been established. Only after field testing or piloting has shown programs are educational and administratively sound, should wide-spread dissemination of new programs take place through demonstration.

The Demonstration

The demonstration is a teaching technique which makes effective use of the sense of sight. In teaching facts or principles by using apparatus or equipment, a demonstration usually saves time and materials, is more accurate and more interesting than individual study and work, and it is productive of more learning. Procedures and methods can be demonstrated to better advantage under normal conditions.

For years, teachers of agriculture have demonstrated many skills in teaching their students; so have other teachers. The teacher of agriculture demonstrates a skill to provide his students with a "clear notion" of how to proceed to do a given thing or to perform a given skill. For a student to have a "clear notion" on how to do something motivates him to want to try his hand, he is "moved" to act.

How about the teacher of agriculture who observes a program in a nonfarm agricultural occupation in a demonstration center? A teacher of agriculture who observes and has explained to him a new type of program which has possibilities in his school will gain insights and develop a desire to implement such a program in his school. In many cases the teacher will be motivated — moved to develop a program in his school as a result of his observation.

Dissemination by Demonstration

The adoption of new ideas is a slow process. People who have studied the process of dissemination of new ideas indicate that written or oral reports of innovations bring about adoption at a much slower rate than does observation. It is also true that people generally are slow to accept new practices — new programs unless they are observed in situations similar to their own.

New innovations (programs) in vocational agriculture should be demonstrated in schools in normal settings, providing maximum opportunity for interested personnel to observe and study them.

According to a study in Iowa farmers go through five stages in accepting new practices. They are:

1. Awareness. The individual learns of the existence of the idea or practice.
2. Interest. At this stage the individual develops interest in the idea and seeks information about it.
3. Evaluation. The individual mentally weighs the merits of the practice in terms of his own situation.
4. Trial. The individual applies the idea or practice on a small scale.
5. Adoption. He accepts the practice and puts it into operation on his farm.

To what extent do these stages apply in a teacher implementing a new program in vocational agriculture? Perhaps all stages apply except stage 4. And, perhaps it will apply in the case of some teachers. What contribution might a demonstration center make in helping a teacher move through the five stages? It would seem that visiting a center would make a significant contribution to moving a teacher through stage 3 — Evaluation — to help him make a decision — "to move" to try his hand at developing a program.

Operation of a Demonstration Center

Schools should be selected for demonstration centers which are centrally located and which have or can provide adequate facilities, equipment, and supplies needed for the program to be demonstrated. The center should have the support of all teachers in the school as well as school administrators at all levels.

Normally, additional financial assistance will be needed to properly publicize and ensure a complete and adequate demonstration center. Some of the major items which will require additional money include; the publication of announcements and brochures regarding the program; the publication of a handbook explaining the program and the course of study used at the center; the preparation of movies and slides to show aspects of program that cannot be demonstrated on a given day; the arrangements for secretarial help and office supplies; and financial reimbursement of people who serve as consultants to the visitors to the center, such as superintendents, principals, advisory people, and cooperating employers.

To demonstrate means to "show and explain." In a demonstration in farm mechanics, for example: Striking an arc, the teacher breaks the demonstration down into steps or parts. He "shows and explains" each step in the demonstration and clears up the "why" as he performs a certain step a given way. And, so it should be in a demonstration center, where people come to observe and study a new program in vocational agriculture. The director of the center will want to "show and explain" to the visitors how the program is set up and how it operates and he will want to clear up "why" certain things are handled as they are. The use of a demonstration center must be in keeping with the fact that learning is a self-active process, that observation at the center will be self-active for the teachers and the others that visit it rather than a passive process.

Visitation to a demonstration center should be planned. Perhaps the director of a center should designate the days of the week the center will be open for observation and ask the visitors to make reservations. A reservation form should provide a checklist of things the visitors would like to see, have discussed, and the people with whom they may wish to talk. Such arrangements will make it possible for the director to carefully plan to meet the needs and desires of the visitors.

Demonstration Programs in Vocational Agriculture

There are many possibilities for demonstration programs in vocational agriculture and cooperative programs with business education, distributive education, and industrial education and with business and industry. In vocational agriculture at the present time there are hundreds of teachers of agriculture interested in going to see and study good sound programs in these areas:

- Agricultural-Supply Businesses—sales and service in which the students enrolled have supervised-work experience in local agricultural businesses.
- Agriculture Business—production and sales and service in which boys in the same class are provided an instructional program for those going into farming and those desiring to be prepared for work in agricultural-supply businesses. The supervised-work experience being appropriate for each group, farming or business.
- Agricultural Mechanics—service and repair in which students get all of their supervised-work experience in the agricultural-mechanics shop.
- Agricultural Mechanics—sales and service in which the supervised work experience is secured in farm-machinery businesses.
- Horticulture—sales and service with its major aspects of landscaping, ornamental, and greenhouse operation, including the kinds of supervised-work experience needed for each in a quality program.

There is a need for centers to demonstrate cooperative programs with the other vocational services, such as distributive education, business education, and industrial education. For example, a young man who is preparing himself for employment in an agricultural supply store should know his agriculture, he needs work in distributive education, and perhaps business education. Therefore, all three services can and should make their contributions in preparing him for his chosen vocation, a cooperative program in vocational education to meet his needs.

Teachers who are considering implementing new programs can profit a great deal from visiting good demonstration centers. They can and will gain insight and "know how" and will be motivated to develop programs which will meet the needs of their students on a sound basis.

The leadership in agricultural education must be alert to select schools to be used to demonstrate new programs after they have been developed and proven effective in preparing students for gainful employment. The dissemination of valuable research and findings from pilot programs through this effective means will be significant to the program of vocational agriculture.

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