

STAFFING A TEACHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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In recent years most teacher education departments which prepare agriculture teachers have received increased attention and financial support from state and federal sources. The need for preparing increased numbers of competent teachers for many types of agricultural programs has never been greater. Dr. Ralph J. Woodin, Ohio, Chairman of the A.V.A. Professional Personnel Recruitment Committee for Agriculture, found that we were short 430 qualified agricultural teachers in the nation in 1966.

Different Kinds of Teachers Needed

The problem of preparing additional teachers each year is made more difficult by the fact that a greater variety of agriculture teachers is needed than ever before. For 40 years teachers who were competent in the agricultural sciences, such competencies having been obtained through course work in college and experience obtained on the home farm, were prepared to

teach youth and adults in agricultural production or farming. Although we will always need to prepare teachers of this type, those who are qualified in specialized agricultural fields are and will be in great demand.

Specialization by teachers is necessary because many of the traditional agricultural production programs have changed their emphasis and new programs have started. They are identified as: agricultural supplies, agricultural mechanics, ornamental horticulture, agricultural products, agricultural resources, and forestry. To prepare teachers who are competent to teach youth and adults in these specialized areas poses a real problem for teacher education in agriculture. This change in "type" of teacher needed affects our staffing problems in teacher education departments.

In Pennsylvania we have attempted to solve the problem of preparing these new "types" of agriculture teachers in three ways. First, the undergraduate curriculum was revised and now our students must secure a minimum of preparation (15 semester credits minimum, 24 maximum) in one of the four agricultural areas of their choice; (a) soil and plant science, (b) animal science, (c) agricultural business and management, or (d) agricultural engineering and mechanics. In addition, each student obtains a minimum of six semester credits of college course work in the three agricultural areas in which he is not specializing.

Second, an increasing number of students majoring in agricultural curriculums other than Agricultural Education are enrolling in a minor in Ag. Ed. and thereby obtaining certification as agricultural teachers.

The third method being employed to prepare teachers of various "types" or to help teachers obtain depth of preparation in a specialized agricultural area is through in-service continuing education courses taught by staff members who are highly trained and competent in one of the four agricultural areas noted above.

Currently we have a staff member with a Ph.D. in Horticulture who is responsible for in-service continuing education courses for teachers in soil and plant science. His rank is Associate Professor of Agricultural Education and Horticulture and he holds a joint appointment in the Departments of Agricultural Education and Horticulture. Another staff member with a Ph.D. in Agricultural Education has a minor in the Agricultural Engineering and Mechanics area. He teaches continuing education courses in this area. A third staff member with a Ed.D. in Agricultural Education has had considerable training and experience in agricultural business and management and is responsible for continuing education courses for teachers in his area of specialization. Our request for the fourth staff position, a person well qualified in the area of animal science and food technology, awaits budget approval.

The three staff members, each representing a specialized agricultural area, devote one-third of their time teaching in-service continuing education graduate courses to agriculture teachers in 13 centers spanning Pennsylvania, one-third time to the preparation of curriculum materials in their specialized area for teacher use, and one-third of their work to

personal research and advising master and doctoral candidates who choose problems in or closely related to the staff member's area of specialization.

Staff members other than the three described above teach undergraduate and graduate courses in Agricultural Education on campus and each teaches at least one graduate course off-campus per year.

The three "specialist" staff members teach two courses (one or two credits of semester value each) during each of the four ten-week terms which make up the annual academic calendar of the University. Topics for each course are chosen by teachers according to need. Occasionally, extension or resident staff specialists from technical agriculture departments of the College of Agriculture will aid in presenting part of a course.

There are many positive arguments in having some staff members of a Department of Agricultural Education who are "specialists" in one of the four generally recognized agricultural areas. These are:

1. Keeping teachers up-to-date with the technological developments in agriculture is made easier when specialists are in the Ag. Ed. Department.
2. Specialists learn of teacher needs and give them immediate help.
3. Teacher and student resource materials are prepared as needed in the "new" agricultural areas by staff who are well qualified. Since the preparation of units of instructional materials for teacher and student use is a part of the specialist staff member's job, he is constantly alert as to the materials teachers need.
4. The "retreading" of older, more experienced teachers or developing teaching competence in unfamiliar agricultural areas is made easier and faster through specialists in Ag. Ed. Departments.
5. Specialists on an Ag. Ed. Department staff provide for a close working relationship with other departments in the college and with the trade associations of a state.
6. Teachers have a source of help which they feel belongs to them since the specialists are in the Ag. Ed. Department in which most of the teachers obtained their preparation for teaching.
7. With the addition of specialists to a department, staff and graduate student research takes on a broadened dimension which is just a little closer to the real teacher problems than was before possible.