

STATE-LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND THE ROLE OF STATE SUPERVISORS OF VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE

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The administrative structure for vocational education at the state level has concerned vocational educators for several years. The authority for state supervision and administration of local programs of vocational agriculture was established by the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 which provided for state-level administration of vocational education, including state and district supervisors.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the Vocational Education Act of 1963 and the Vocational Amendments in 1968 and 1972 brought about increased variation in administrative structures. Divisions of vocational education within state departments of education traditionally were organized by occupational areas including agriculture, home economics, distribution, trades and industries, and business and office education; now many are organized according to levels of programs such as secondary, post-secondary, and adult education and by functions such as special needs and career development. The emphasis in many states has shifted from supervision of instruction to providing services.

As state-level administrative structures for vocational education change, the role of state supervisors of vocational agriculture may also change. Shoemaker (1967), Nyquist (1967), Iannaccone (1967) and Rice (1967) have discussed the relationships of structure and the role of supervisors, but no studies have recently investigated the perceptions of teachers and supervisors regarding the role of state supervisors of vocational agriculture or the relationships between that role and state-level administrative structure.

Purpose of the Study

The study (Barrick, 1980) was designed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of state-level administrative structures for vocational education within state departments of education?
2. What is the current role of state supervisors of vocational agriculture as perceived by high school teachers and state supervisors?
3. What is the expected role of state supervisors of vocational agriculture as perceived by high school teachers and state supervisors?
4. What is the relationship between current and expected roles of state supervisors of vocational agriculture?
5. What is the relationship between state-level administrative structures for vocational education and current and expected roles of state supervisors of vocational agriculture?

Methodology

The study was conducted in two phases. The population for the first phase was the 50 head state supervisors of vocational agriculture in the United States. All 50 responded to a mailed questionnaire and telephone follow-up developed to collect information regarding state-level administrative structure for vocational education. States were then categorized into four groups based on administrative structure.

The target populations for the second phase of the study were all high school teachers and all state supervisors of vocational agriculture in the United States. The samples were 504 high school teachers randomly selected from 19 states and all 196 state supervisors of vocational agriculture. The 19 states were randomly selected from each of the four groups determined by type of administrative structure.

The second instrument was developed to collect information regarding the role of state supervisors of vocational agriculture. Two forms of the instrument were developed. One requested perceptions of the current role of state supervisors and of local school personnel and the other form requested perceptions of the expected role of state supervisors and local school personnel.

Role was defined as the degree of authority of state supervisors for each of 37 statements compared to degree of authority of local school personnel. Half of the teachers in each state in the study were randomly assigned to one form of the instrument. All state supervisors within a state received the same form of the instrument, either current role or expected role. The form of the instrument was randomly assigned to each state. Data were collected by mailed questionnaire with 90 percent of the state supervisors and 78 percent of the teachers responding.

Findings

State-Level Administrative Structure

The 50 states were categorized into four groups based on the information provided by the head state supervisors concerning state-level administrative structure for vocational education. Categorization into groups was determined by whether or not the supervisor reported directly to the vocational director. The groupings (structures) and the number of states in each are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. STATE-LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

State Supervisors of Vocational Agriculture Have Other Responsibilities		State Supervisors of Vocational Agriculture Have No Other Responsibilities	
Head State Supervisor Does Not Report Directly to Vocational Director	Head State Supervisor Reports Directly to Vocational Director	Head State Supervisor Does Not Report Directly to Vocational Director	Head State Supervisor Reports Directly to Vocational Director
STRUCTURE 1	STRUCTURE 2	STRUCTURE 3	STRUCTURE 4
(16 states)	(4 states)	(15 states)	(15 states)

Role of State Supervisors and Local Personnel

Teachers and state supervisors indicated their perceptions of the role of state supervisors of vocational agriculture and local school personnel (teachers, supervisors, administrators) in terms of the degree of authority of each group for 37 activity statements. Degree of authority was indicated on a scale of one (no authority for the activity) to seven (a high degree of authority). The 37 activity statements were grouped into four areas: administrative; improvement of instruction; research and evaluation; and public relations.

Current Role. Supervisors and teachers did not differ in their perceptions of the current role of state supervisors. Both groups ranked the current degree of authority of state supervisors for the four areas in the following descending order: research and evaluation; improvement of instruction; administrative; and public relations activities, as shown in Table 1.

For the current degree of authority of local school personnel, the state supervisors and teachers differed slightly in their rankings, as shown in Table 1. Teachers ranked the degree of authority of local personnel in the following descending order: public relations; administrative; improvement of instruction; and research and evaluation activities. State supervisors ranked the current degree of authority of local personnel as: public relations; improvement of instruction; research and evaluation; and administrative activities.

Expected Role. Teachers and state supervisors did not differ in their ranking of the four groups of activities according to the expected role of state supervisors of vocational agriculture. Table 1 shows that both groups ranked the expected degree of authority of state supervisors in the following descending order: research and evaluation; improvement of instruction; administrative; and public relations.

Teachers and supervisors also agreed on the ranking of the four groups of activities according to their perceptions of the expected degree of authority of local school personnel. Both groups ranked the expected degree of authority for the four areas in the following descending order: public relations; administrative; research and evaluation; and improvement of instruction activities.

Comparison of Current and Expected Roles. In comparing the perceptions of current with expected degree of authority of state supervisors and local personnel, few differences were indicated by teachers or supervisors. In all comparisons except

Table 1

PERCEPTIONS OF THE CURRENT AND
EXPECTED ROLES OF STATE SUPERVISORS OF VOCATIONAL
AGRICULTURE AND LOCAL PERSONNEL

Role ^a	Administrative Activities	Improvement of Instruction Activities	Research and Evaluation Activities	Public Relations Activities
<i>PERCEPTIONS OF STATE SUPERVISORS</i>				
Current Role of Supervisors	3.72	4.41	5.14	2.88
Expected Role of Supervisors	4.04	4.47	5.09	2.90
Current Role of Local Personnel	5.04	5.49	5.42	6.33
Expected Role of Local Personnel	5.37	5.43	5.26	6.34
<i>PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS</i>				
Current Role of Supervisors	3.60	3.89	4.34	2.77
Expected Role of Supervisors	3.76	4.05	4.54	2.88
Current Role of Local Personnel	5.36	5.25	5.24	6.00
Expected Role of Local Personnel	5.44	5.23	5.34	6.02

^aScale ranged from 1 (no degree of authority) to 7 (high degree of authority).

two, both teachers and supervisors indicated the current and expected degree of authority at the same level. The teachers indicated the current degree of authority of state supervisors for research and evaluation activities at the 3.5 to 4.49 level on the seven-point scale and the expected degree of authority at the 4.5 to 5.49 level. For the degree of authority of local personnel for improvement of instruction activities, the state supervisors indicated a lower expected degree of authority (4.6) than current degree of authority (5.5).

Relationships Between Role and State-Level Administrative Structure

In analyzing the relationships between the current and expected roles of state supervisors of vocational agriculture and state-level administrative structure, Kendall's Tau coefficients were calculated. The coefficients express the relationship between perceptions of teachers and state supervisors on a scale of one to seven (no authority to high authority) and state-level administrative structure. Administrative structure was indicated on a continuum from low contact with local vocational agriculture programs and teachers with indirect reporting to the state director of vocational education to high contact with local teachers and programs with direct reporting to the state director of vocational education.

Low positive relationships, significant at the .05 level, exist between state-level administrative structure and the following (Kendall's Tau coefficients ranged from .10 to .29 as shown in Table 2):

1. Teachers' perceptions of the current degree of authority of state supervisors of vocational agriculture for administrative, improvement of instruction, research and evaluation, and public relations activities.
2. Supervisors' perceptions of the current degree of authority of state supervisors of vocational agriculture for administrative, improvement of instruction, and public relations activities.
3. Teachers' perceptions of the expected degree of authority of state supervisors for administrative and improvement of instruction activities.
4. Supervisors' perceptions of the expected degree of authority of state supervisors for administrative improvement of instruction, research and evaluation, and public relations activities.

Table 2

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STATE-LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE
STRUCTURE AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE
ROLE OF STATE SUPERVISORS

Group of Activities	Kendall's Tau Coefficients			
	Current Role		Expected Role	
	Teachers	Supervisors	Teachers	Supervisors
Administrative	.20 (n=193)	.25 (n=86)	.15 (n=187)	.20 (n=85)
Improvement of Instruction	.21 (n=193)	.29 (n=87)	.15 (n=187)	.16 (n=85)
Research and Evaluation	.11 (n=191)	.12 (n=87)	.06 (n=189)	.18 (n=85)
Public Relations	.11 (n=188)	.20 (n=86)	.001 (n=187)	.21 (n=85)

Relationships were generally negative between state-level administrative structure and the current and expected roles of local school personnel. Low negative relationships, significant at the .01 level, were found between state-level administrative structure and the current degree of authority of local personnel for administrative and improvement of instruction activities, as perceived by teachers. No relationship was found between state-level administrative structure and the current or expected degree of authority of local school personnel as perceived by teachers or supervisors for any other group of activities.

Conclusions

On the basis of state-level administration structure, states are categorized into four groups as follows:

Structure 1--Lowest Degree of Authority:

State supervisors of vocational agriculture have responsibilities in addition to vocational agriculture and the head state supervisor does not report directly to the state director of vocational education (16 states).

Structure 2--Third Highest Degree of Authority:

State supervisors of vocational agriculture have responsibilities in addition to vocational agriculture and the head state supervisor reports directly to the state director of vocational education (4 states).

Structure 3--Second Highest Degree of Authority:

State supervisors of vocational agriculture have no other responsibilities and the head state supervisor does not report directly to the state director of vocational education (15 states).

Structure 4--Highest Degree of Authority:

State supervisors of vocational agriculture have no other responsibilities and the head state supervisor reports directly to the state director of vocational education (15 states).

State supervisors and teachers have similar perceptions of the current role of state supervisors of vocational agriculture. Both groups perceive the current degree of authority of state supervisors to be at the 3.5 to 4.49 level, with authority for research and evaluation activities being the highest. Supervisors and teachers perceived the current degree of authority of local personnel to be highest for public relations activities.

Supervisors and teachers are also similar in their perceptions of the expected degree of authority of state supervisors. Both groups perceive the expected degree of authority to be at the same level as the current degree of authority, with the highest expected degree of authority for research and evaluation activities. Supervisors and teachers perceive that the highest expected degree of authority of local personnel is public relations activities.

There is no difference between the perceptions of the current and expected roles of state supervisors as perceived by teachers and supervisors. There is little difference between the perceptions of teachers and supervisors concerning the current and expected roles of local school personnel.

State-level administrative structures which were expected to result in more authority were found to indicate that there are low positive relationships between state-level administrative structure and the current degree of authority of state supervisors for certain groups of activities. There are also low positive relationships between structure and the expected degree of authority of state supervisors for certain groups of activities, as perceived by both teachers and supervisors.

Recommendations

Further investigation into the actual activities performed by state supervisors is needed, particularly in the area of improvement of instruction. In addition, there may be other persons such as local vocational agriculture supervisors, local vocational supervisors, general supervisors and administrators, and teacher educators who are or should be performing the activities that state supervisors of vocational agriculture perform.

Research is needed to identify and describe the barriers that prohibit supervisors from performing supervisory activities. The perceptions of local school personnel, such as supervisors and administrators, concerning the role of state supervisors should be identified and described.

Research is needed to identify and describe the degree and nature of actual contact between state supervisors and local teachers and local programs of vocational agriculture. Additional research is also needed to identify other factors that may be involved in the relationship between state-level administrative structure and the role of state supervisors.

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(Continued on page 30)