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**A PILOT STUDY FOR TEACHING
AGRICULTURAL CAREERS AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL**

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This research discussed in this article was carried out as the author's dissertation and a pilot study to a similar program now being done at Oklahoma State University.

The need for a curriculum which gives the student of vocational agriculture an opportunity to explore various careers available to him in agriculture and agriculturally related occupations has been apparent for some time. During the past 40 years there has been a great shift in the population of the United States from farms and ranches to city or urban dwelling. Inherent with this shift has been an increase in the number of people who are engaged in off-farm processing and marketing of agricultural products.

A student who has selected vocational agriculture as an area of study in high school should be exposed to the possibilities and opportunities available to him in agriculture. According to Hoppock (1967)

"One cannot choose what one does not know, and many occupations are unknown to most of us. One may stumble into an appropriate occupation by sheer luck, but the wise choice of an occupation requires accurate information about what occupations are available, what they require, and what they offer."

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to pilot test a method of instruction which might help the vocational agriculture instructor to teach careers in agriculture.

In order for the purpose of the research to be accomplished, the following procedures were followed:

- A. Identify the occupational clusters available in the broad field of agriculture, and a representative occupation within each cluster;
- B. Develop a curriculum unit and an audio-visual aid for the representative occupation;
- C. Develop a curriculum unit on self discovery;
- D. Select teachers who would field test these curriculum units in their Vocational Agriculture I class;
- E. Review proposed units with curriculum specialists and teachers prior to teaching time;
- F. Pre-test students using individual unit tests;
- G. Have teachers teach units;

- H. Post-test students;
- I. Review units with teachers, curriculum specialists and consultant after units had been taught; and
- J. Determine appropriate statistical techniques to analyze pre-and post-test results.

Two schools from Oklahoma's four districts, Northeast, Northwest, Southwest, and Southeast were selected. Four schools from the Central District were chosen because Oklahoma City is located in the Central District and several departments of vocational agriculture are located in this metropolitan area. One school in each of the five districts and one from Oklahoma City were designated as experimental schools and the six remaining schools were assigned to the control group.

This research project included all of the Vocational Agriculture I students in these schools.

Methodology of the Study

First, representative occupations from the broad field of agriculture were selected using the counsel of authorities from each division along with demand data for agricultural production, agricultural sales and services, agricultural mechanics, agricultural products, ornamental horticulture, natural resources and forestry. A curriculum and video tape were developed for each of the following occupations: (1) farm management (operator); (2) agricultural sales clerk, (3) agricultural mechanic, (4) meat cutter, (5) nurseryman; and (6) forestry technician. Each of these units were taught in an experimental school where the students were pre-and post-tested. In the control schools the students were given the pre-and post-tests and these students were not taught using the special units.

Findings and Conclusions of the Research

1. The gain in scores made by the students was significant at the .05 level for each unit tested. It was found that the scores of the students did rise significantly on each of the units taught in the experimental schools as compared to the control schools.

2. It was concluded that units of curriculum developed in the research project should be made available to teachers of vocational agriculture in Oklahoma through the State Department of Vocational Technical Education.
3. It was concluded that it would be desirable to establish a library of the video tapes at the State Department of Vocational Technical Education.
4. Because of the very low pre-test scores made by students in this experiment, it was concluded that a feasibility study needs to be conducted to determine the possibility of an undergraduate course on teaching career development be added to the curriculum at Oklahoma State University.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in light of the conclusions drawn about this study.

1. Phase one of this project showed that the units of curriculum taught by this method produced significant differences between control and experimental schools even though two of the control schools had significant gains between pre-and post-tests. Therefore, it is recommended that the project be continued through phase two on a broader base. It is also recommended that a third phase, using the control schools as experimental schools, be added if possible.
2. A limited number of students from minority ethnic groups and students whose parents had an income of less than \$3,000 were included in this study. To determine if these two variables have a significant effect on the attainment of curriculum objectives it is recommended that a larger proportion of minority group students and students whose parents are economically disadvantaged be included in phase two of the project.

3. **Representatives of the agricultural education staff who gave the pre-test at the control schools created a certain atmosphere. This atmosphere was not present when the post-test was given and could have been the variable causing a negative gain in the mean score for some of the control schools. It is therefore recommended that a representative from the Agricultural Education Department give both the pre-and post-tests at schools included in the project for phase two.**
4. **Other variables which could have a direct bearing on the accomplishment of the curriculum objectives are mental ability and class attendance. It is therefore recommended that these variables be included in phase two.**
5. **It is contended by some, that students of vocational agriculture in Oklahoma achieve the objectives of these curriculum units during the four years they are enrolled in vocational agriculture. It is recommended that the same post-test, given to freshmen students who will be participating in phase two, also be given to senior students of vocational agriculture in the participating schools.**
6. **It is recommended that the units of curriculum developed in this research project be made available to teachers of vocational agriculture in Oklahoma through the State Department of Vocational Technical Education Curriculum Division.**
7. **It is recommended that a library of the video tapes be established at the State Department of Vocational Technical Education Curriculum Division where teachers can have access to the tapes.**
8. **Because of the very low pre-test scores made by students in this experiment it is recommended that a feasibility study be conducted to determine the possibility of an undergraduate course on teaching career development be added to the curriculum at Oklahoma State University.**

9. Reactions of the teachers and the consultant led to the conclusion that video taping is an adequate method for bringing occupational information to the classroom. It is recommended that use of this audio-visual aid for future units be continued.

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