

## THE ROLE OF THE VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE INSTRUCTOR AS A COMMUNITY LEADER OF AGRICULTURE

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### *Introduction*

In recent years many transitions have occurred in high school vocational agriculture programs in Mississippi. Federal legislation authorized the broadening of instructional programs to include training for agribusiness as well as a continuation and improvement of the production agriculture programs. The expansion of current programs and the establishment of new programs in agriculture have added new dimensions to the role of the vocational agriculture instructor.

The agricultural situation has changed drastically during the past few years. Implications of the current and long-range situation in agriculture point to the need for competent and aggressive agricultural leaders. Due to these recent developments in agriculture and transitions in publicly supported vocational agriculture programs, there is a need to study and analyze the role of the vocational agriculture instructor as a community leader of agriculture (Byler, 1981).

### *Objectives of the Study*

The primary objective of this study was to analyze the role of the vocational agriculture instructor as a community leader of agriculture. Specific objectives were as follows:

1. Identify and determine the descriptive role of the vocational agriculture instructor as a community leader of agriculture.
2. Determine whether there are significant differences between vocational agriculture teachers and administrators in the perceived role of the vocational agriculture instructor as a community leader of agriculture.

3. Analyze factors which inhibit or enhance the vocational agriculture instructor's role as a community leader of agriculture.
4. Determine whether there are significant differences in perceived factors which inhibit or enhance the vocational agriculture instructor's role as a community leader of agriculture between vocational agriculture instructors and their administrators.

### *Methods and Procedures*

#### *Population and Sample*

The population consisted of all 1980-81 Mississippi vocational agriculture instructors and their administrators (principal or vocational director). A random sample, stratified by supervisory district, was selected. The sample consisted of 157 vocational agriculture instructors and their administrators, a sample total of 314.

#### *Instrumentation*

A demographic data questionnaire and a survey instrument were constructed and field tested for use in data collection. The demographic data questionnaire consisted of 37 items and the survey instrument consisted of three parts. Part I contained 55 items relating to the role of the vocational agriculture instructor. An 11-point Likert-type scale ranging from "no importance" to "utmost importance" was used for responding to Part I. Part II contained 34 items which may influence the vocational agriculture instructor's role as a community leader of agriculture. An 11-point Likert-type scale ranging from "greatly inhibits" to "greatly enhances" was used in responding to Part II. Part III consisted of nine instructor role areas. An 11-point Likert-type scale ranging from "no importance" to "utmost importance" was used in responding to Part III. The values were then transformed to a 16-point scale.

#### *Data Collection and Analysis*

Data were collected with a mailed questionnaire. A response rate of 70 percent was obtained for both groups. Frequencies, means and standard deviations were calculated on the instructor demographic data. Factor analysis and a t test were used to analyze the data from the survey instrument.

## Results

### *Ratings of Role Activities*

The total mean ratings ranged from a low of 6.10 to a high of 13.48. A rating of 8.0 would be "midpoint" or "average" importance on the 16-point transformed scale.

Activities which received a mean rating of 12.0 or above (upper quartile of the rating scale) and listed by mean rank are as follows: (1) show a sincere interest in people and their problems, (2) demonstrate professionalism in the community, (3) assist in making the community a better place to live, (4) make instructional visits to young farmers, (5) advise and assist the FFA in conducting community activities and projects, (6) strive to improve the image of farming and agribusiness, (7) develop and implement a public relations program for the vocational agriculture department, (8) promote community involvement in agricultural affairs, (9) establish and maintain a rapport with community leaders, and (10) become an active member of a local church.

### *Ratings of Influencing Variables*

Six variables were identified as inhibiting factors (mean of less than 8.0) and 28 variables were identified as enhancing factors (mean of more than 8.0). The six variables perceived to inhibit the vocational agriculture instructor's role are as follows: (1) vocational agriculture instructor teaches classes other than vocational agriculture, (2) vocational agriculture instructor has more than four class preparations each day, (3) vocational agriculture instructor does not have a farm background, (4) vocational agriculture instructor has a supplemental occupation, (5) vocational agriculture instructor teaches more than four day classes, and (6) more than 60 students are enrolled in a single teacher program.

The variables perceived to enhance the vocational agriculture instructor's role, and receiving a mean response of 12.0 or higher are as follows (listed by mean rank): (1) community is very supportive of vocational agriculture program, (2) vocational agriculture instructor has rapport with community leaders, (3) school and community cooperate effectively, (4) vocational agriculture instructor has the ability to budget and use time effectively, (5) vocational agriculture instructor is competent in community leadership, (6) community places high prestige on the position of vocational agriculture instructor, (7) vocational agriculture instructor is competent in technical agriculture, (8) leadership training has been provided for

vocational agriculture instructors, (9) vocational agriculture instructor is self-motivated for community involvement, (10) vocational agriculture instructor views community agricultural leadership as an important job responsibility, (11) vocational agriculture instructor is actively involved in the total school program, (12) school board views community agricultural leadership as an important vocational agriculture instructor job responsibility, (13) administration views community agricultural leadership as an important vocational agriculture instructor job responsibility, and (14) FFA chapter is actively involved in community activities.

### *Group Comparison of Role Activity Factors*

A factor analysis was used to identify factors for group comparisons of response ratings between vocational agriculture instructors and their administrators. A factor analysis of responses on the 55-item role activity survey yielded six factors.

No significant t value was observed for any of the six factors identified. The factors ranked by total group mean factor score are as follows:

1. School/community relationships ( $\bar{x} = 12.66$ ).
2. Adult education ( $\bar{x} = 11.75$ ).
3. Community development ( $\bar{x} = 11.38$ ).
4. Dissemination of agricultural information ( $\bar{x} = 11.20$ ).
5. Cooperation with Extension service ( $\bar{x} = 10.59$ ).
6. Community organizations ( $\bar{x} = 9.33$ ).

### *Group Comparison of Influencing Variable Factors*

A factor analysis was also used to identify factors for group comparisons of influencing variable ratings between vocational agriculture instructors and their administrators. A factor analysis of responses on the 34-item inhibit/enhance activity survey yielded four factors. The factors ranked by total group mean factor score are as follows:

1. Views of agricultural education personnel toward community agricultural leadership ( $\bar{x} = 14.53$ ).

Table 1

MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND T VALUES BETWEEN VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE INSTRUCTORS' AND ADMINISTRATORS' RATINGS OF THE NINE INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITY AREAS

| Area of Instructor Responsibility                          | Vocational<br>Agriculture<br>Instructors | Principals           | Total                | t      |
|--|--|----------------------|----------------------|--------|
|  | <u>Mean</u><br>S.D.                      | <u>Mean</u><br>S.D.  | <u>Mean</u><br>S.D.  |        |
| Classroom instruction                                      | <u>14.06</u><br>2.73                     | <u>13.90</u><br>3.26 | <u>14.17</u><br>4.06 | .34    |
| FFA advisor  | <u>14.24</u><br>2.84                     | <u>12.80</u><br>3.68 | <u>13.92</u><br>5.92 | 2.99** |
| School faculty member                                      | <u>12.78</u><br>3.41                     | <u>13.68</u><br>3.68 | <u>13.32</u><br>3.80 | -1.72  |
| Professional self-improvement                              | <u>12.82</u><br>2.96                     | <u>13.13</u><br>3.13 | <u>13.09</u><br>3.32 | -.68   |
| Supervised occupational experience<br>programs of students | <u>12.71</u><br>2.84                     | <u>11.81</u><br>3.36 | <u>12.62</u><br>5.98 | 1.97*  |
| Community agricultural leadership                          | <u>12.52</u><br>2.90                     | <u>11.98</u><br>2.82 | <u>12.53</u><br>4.54 | -1.28  |



2. Value of vocational agriculture as perceived by school and community ( $\bar{x} = 14.41$ ).
3. Additional compensation for community involvement ( $\bar{x} = 11.11$ ).
4. Allocation of teacher time to inschool instruction ( $\bar{x} = 7.59$ ).

A significant t value of -2.45 ( $p < .05$ ) was observed for the factor "allocation of teacher time to inschool instruction." Mean responses of 5.71 and 9.45 were observed for vocational agriculture instructors and administrators, respectively. From this analysis it may be concluded that vocational agriculture instructors believed that an inadequate allocation of teacher time to inschool instruction was an inhibiting factor in performing their role as a community leader of agriculture. Whereas, their administrators did not perceive this to be an inhibiting factor.

### *Group Comparison of Instructor Responsibility Areas*

Participants were asked to rate nine areas of responsibility as to the importance of each area in performing the job of the vocational agriculture instructor. The means, standard deviations and t values between ratings by vocational agriculture instructors and administrators of the nine instructor responsibility areas are summarized in Table 1. Mean ratings were significantly higher for vocational agriculture instructors than for administrators for the following areas:

1. FFA advisor ( $p < .01$ ).
2. Adult education ( $p < .01$ ).
3. Local agricultural program planning ( $p < .01$ ).
4. Supervised occupational experience programs ( $p < .05$ ).

### *Conclusions and Recommendations*

1. A mean rating of 8.0 or higher by vocational agriculture instructors and administrators for all but three of the 55 instructor role activities suggests that the vocational agriculture instructor does have an important role as a community leader of agriculture. There should be sufficient allocation of time and resources to perform this role.

2. To perform this role vocational agriculture instructors should strive to show a sincere interest in people and their problems, demonstrate professionalism in the community, assist in making the community a better place to live, and place high priority on community involvement.
3. The vocational agriculture instructor's role as a community leader of agriculture may be inhibited if assigned classes other than vocational agriculture, has more than four class preparations each day, teaches more than four day classes, or has more than 60 students enrolled in a single teacher program.
4. The most important variable perceived to enhance the vocational agriculture instructor's role as a community agricultural leader is the support the community gives to the vocational agriculture program. The vocational agriculture instructor must, therefore, be aware of the importance of good public relations for the vocational agriculture program.
5. Since no significant t values were observed, it may be concluded that vocational agriculture instructors and their administrators generally agree on the importance ratings of the six role activity factors.
6. A significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) was observed between vocational agriculture instructors and administrators for "allocation of teacher time to inschool instruction." The vocational agriculture instructors perceived this to be an inhibiting factor on their role as a community agricultural leader.
7. Significant differences in mean ratings between vocational agriculture instructors and administrators were observed for four of the nine instructor responsibility areas. The most important area as perceived by administrators is "classroom instruction." Therefore, it is imperative that vocational agriculture instructors strive to maintain the appropriate inter-relationship among the FFA, inschool instruction and SOE. This important relationship should be communicated to the administration as well as to students, parents, and community members.

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