

Debate the Issue

Instruction in Agriculture Should be Primarily for Preparing People for Careers in Agriculture

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In recent years, the educational intent (mission and goals) of vocational education programs in agriculture has been the subject of much debate. Debate both within and outside of the profession has occurred primarily because of the fear of losing vocational education programs in agriculture at the secondary school level unless changes occur and more students are served. What should be the purpose of vocational agriculture programs in public secondary education in this country? How should instruction in agriculture be delivered?

The Issues Defined

It is believed by the authors the "profession should lead the profession," not be led by outside agencies or organizations. Therefore, it is the profession's obligation and responsibility to identify those priority issues which confront it, then develop and implement plans to resolve those issues.

The two issues of this debate are:

Issue #1: Should the purpose of instruction in agriculture be primarily for preparing people for careers in agriculture including entrepreneurship, or should the purpose be for vocational preparation plus several other aspects, such as practical agricultural arts at all grade levels?

Issue #2: Should the purpose of instruction in agriculture impact upon the delivery system, or should the delivery be independent of purpose?

One of the key elements of this debate hinges upon terminology. In addressing these issues, it was assumed that: (a) vocational agriculture is not synonymous with agricultural education; (b) the terms "vocational agriculture" and "vocational education in agriculture" are synonymous; (c) the term "preparation" makes reference to vocational agriculture programs; (d) the term "careers in agriculture" is the same as "occupations in agriculture"; and (e) "instruction in agriculture" or "education in agriculture" connotes vocational agriculture. Likewise, the phrase "education about agriculture" refers to "practical agricultural arts," or "agricultural literacy," or "general education in agriculture."

There are those in the profession who believe vocational agriculture programs have outlived their usefulness, are outdated, and are in need of major changes. Others profess the instructional program model is still educationally sound--the major adjustment needed is to refocus the content of the curriculum from that of production agriculture to instruction which teaches students those competencies associated with

(Continued on page 12)