

ERIC: A RESOURCE FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS IN AGRICULTURE

J. David McCracken
Research and Development
Specialist

The National Center for Vocational
and Technical Education
The Ohio State University

There are many educators working for improvement in educational practice. These people, of which many are teacher educators in agriculture, are the Change Agents of Education.

Teacher Educators as Change Agents

Change agents, in this case teacher educators in agriculture, may act as catalysts, as solution givers, or as process helpers.¹ The change agent as a catalyst exerts pressure for change. As a solution giver he provides help in problem resolution. As a process helper, the change agent has responsibility for: (1) building a relationship; (2) diagnosing the problem; (3) acquiring relevant resources; (4) choosing the solution; (5) gaining acceptance; and (6) stabilizing the innovation and generating self-renewal.

Resource Acquisition for Educational Change

An important part of this model for educational change is the acquisition of relevant resources related to a problem. Knowledge is multiplying. Research results and outcomes of exemplary practice are written and reported at an ever increasing rate. In response to the need for systematic access to this growing body of educational knowledge, the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) was created by the U.S. Office of Education in 1966. ERIC serves as a linkage between producers and users of research and exemplary practice information.

ERIC System Components

The ERIC system consists of six inter-related components:² (1) a headquarters staff in the U.S. Office of Education, National Center for Educational Communication; (2) a network of specialized clearinghouses located at various universities and professional organizations; (3) a contractor who operates the ERIC facility to provide centralized computer and technical services; (4) the ERIC Document Reproduction Service, operated under contract with the Leasco Information Products Company; (5) the U. S. Government Printing Office, distributor of Research in Education and other ERIC publications; and (6) Crowell, Collier, and MacMillan Infor-

mation Sciences, Inc., publisher of Current Index to Journals in Education.

There are currently 19 clearinghouses responsible for acquiring, reviewing, processing, and disseminating research and related materials within their scope. They also engage in the review, synthesis, and interpretation of this literature. Two clearinghouses of special interest to teacher educators in agriculture are the ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Washington, D. C. and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Vocational and Technical Education, The Center for Vocational and Technical Education, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.

ERIC Services³

The information in the ERIC system is made available to users in a simple and direct manner. A user may search for document titles in the subject, author, or institutional indexes of one of several ERIC information products (i.e., AIM, ARM, or RIE). The brief abstract of a relevant document can be read in the same ERIC publication in which it is indexed. If further information is required, the full text of the document may be read on microfiche or hard copy reproductions. Over 40,000 documents have been announced and are available by this means.

To use the system, a user may subscribe to ERIC information products so that he can conduct searches of the collection or maintain regular surveillance of the literature. Microfiche may be obtained directly from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service or microfiche duplicates can be obtained from some state Research Coordination Units (RCU). A microfiche is a 4" x 6" sheet of flat film which may contain as many as 70 pages of text. Microfiche can be read on a microfiche reader and full-size copies of individual pages can be made with a microfiche reader-printer. More information on obtaining and using microfiche is given in ERIC information products.

Rapid and accurate searches of the entire ERIC collection may be made at computer installations where ERIC tapes, AIM-ARM tapes, and appropriate computer programs have been incorporated. Information on ERIC computer searching is available from many RCU's or the ERIC Clearinghouse on Vocational and Technical Education.

ERIC Access Products⁴

Several ERIC information products provide vocational and technical educators with access to documents in the ERIC system.

These are published on a regular basis and are available by subscription.

Abstracts of Instructional Materials in Vocational and Technical Education (AIM) is published quarterly and provides indexes to and resumes of a variety of instructional materials processed by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Vocational and Technical Education. Documents announced in AIM, and in the companion ARM, may also have been announced in Research in Education (RIE), but many will only be announced in AIM or ARM. AIM and ARM provide the only comprehensive source of all documents processed by the Vocational and Technical Education Clearinghouse.

Abstracts of Research Materials in Vocational and Technical Education (ARM) is published quarterly and provides indexes to and abstracts of research and related materials processed by the Clearinghouse. ARM, and its companion AIM, have announced 9,309 documents of interest to vocational and technical educators in the first 17 issues.

Research in Education (RIE) provides indexes to and abstracts of approximately 1,000 documents input to Central ERIC each month by all 19 Clearinghouses.

Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE) is a monthly publication which provides detailed indexes to articles from over 500 journals related to education.

Computer tapes are available which permit rapid, accurate searching of the entire ERIC collection. ERIC tapes contain resumes of documents in RIE and articles in CIJE. AIM-ARM tapes contain resumes of over 4,000 documents on vocational and technical education which have not appeared in RIE.

ERIC Information Analysis Products

To provide vocational and technical educators with review, synthesis, analysis and interpretation of the literature in ERIC and elsewhere, the ERIC Clearinghouse on Vocational and Technical Education has prepared many information analysis papers. A few of special interest to teacher educators in agriculture are:

Agricultural Education Instructional Materials is an indexed annotated bibliography of materials developed for teacher or student use for secondary, post-secondary, or adult agricultural education classes. It is in press at the Government Printing Office and will be available in Summer 1972.

Review and Synthesis of Research in Agricultural Education, Second Edition, by Earl T. Carpenter and John H. Rodgers, provides baseline information on research in agricultural education.

Review and synthesis of research on comprehensive topics (e.g., cooperative vocational education, occupational exploration, rural disadvantaged, individualizing instruction, etc.) serves all vocational and technical fields, including agricultural education.

Occupational Experience for Vocational Education Teachers: A Handbook for Teacher Educators, by Gary Beasley and James Smiley (GPO Stock Number 1780-0795, 30 cents) describes existing college and university programs.

An Application of Research: Working With Opinion Leaders to Accelerate Change in Vocational-Technical Education, by Garry R. Bice, provides information for teacher educators interested in improving their effectiveness as change agents.

Summary

Teacher educators in agriculture concerned with moving education from where it is to where they would like it to be should consider the importance of relevant resources in effecting change. Change agents should learn to acquire and use information. The ERIC system is designed to provide a link between educational research and practice. The ERIC Clearinghouse on Vocational and Technical Education acquires and processes materials in agricultural education for the ERIC system and provides services and products designed to aid change agents as they work to improve educational practice. Teacher educators can assist in this effort by contributing relevant materials, suggesting topics for future product development, and utilizing the system to improve education in public schools.

REFERENCES

¹ Ronald G. Havelock, A Guide to Innovation in Education. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Center for Research on the Utilization of Scientific Knowledge, The University of Michigan, 1970.

² Lee G. Burchinal, "The Educational Resources Information Center: An Emergent National System," Journal of Data Processing, Vol. 7, No. 2, April 1970.

³ Centergram, A publication of The Center for Vocational and Technical Education, Vol. VI, No. 2, December 1971. (Columbus,

Ohio: The Center for Vocational and Technical Education, The Ohio State University.

⁴ibid.

* * * * *