

PERCEPTIONS OF VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE INSTRUCTORS
AND SUPERINTENDENTS CONCERNING VOCATIONAL
AGRICULTURE SUMMER PROGRAMS IN IOWA

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The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 required directed or supervised work experience for students of vocational agriculture. This pragmatic approach to education in agriculture, coupled with the seasonal nature of agriculture, resulted in continuous year-round vocational programs that dictated a need for extended contracts or 12-month employment for vocational agriculture teachers. Subsequent vocational legislation continued to emphasize the need for planned and supervised work experience as an integral part of vocational education in agriculture, which demanded continuous employment for continuous programs.

Vocational agriculture instructors employed on a 12-month or extended contract basis work approximately 25 percent of their contract time during the summer months. A concern of teachers and administrators is the use of teacher time during the summer months and its effect on and value to the vocational agriculture program and community.

In the spring of 1978 an attitudinal study of this concern was conducted as part of a degree program at Iowa State University. Two objectives of the study were: (1) to determine the perceptions of vocational agriculture teachers and their administrators toward selected summer program activities, and (2) to determine if differences exist between vocational agriculture teachers and superintendents in their perceptions of the importance of selected summer program activities.

Methods and Procedures

The design of the study was causal-comparative as defined by Borg (1963) and involved the identification of two subgroups associated with vocational agriculture programs in Iowa.

The attitudes of 100 randomly selected teachers of vocational agriculture and their corresponding superintendents, who

were responsible for administering the vocational agriculture summer programs, were surveyed through the use of mailed questionnaires. The populations excluded teachers who had not completed one full year of vocational agriculture teaching.

The questionnaire was comprised of three parts: part one contained a listing of summer program activities, the response framework, and instructions; part two required respondents to allocate a given number of days to each of eight identified summer program activity categories; and part three sought demographic data concerning the school, teacher, superintendent, and vocational agriculture program.

The 63 summer program activity items used in the study were selected through a review of 18 state plans for vocational agriculture and related literature. The activity items were then assigned to the eight summer program activity categories by a panel of agriculture educators. The eight summer program categories are listed in Tables 1 and 3.

Table 1

CALCULATED RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS (ALPHA AND STANDARDIZED ALPHA) FOR THE EIGHT SUMMER PROGRAM ACTIVITY CATEGORIES AND TOTAL SUMMER PROGRAM

Summer Program Activity Category	Alpha	Standardized Alpha
Departmental Administration	.80696	.82671
Instructional Improvement	.93014	.93084
Agriculture Organizations and Associations	.79361	.81696
Supervised Occupational Experience (SOE)	.89680	.90401
FFA	.91442	.91688
Resource Improvement	.84803	.85547
Teaching	.78694	.78419
Professional Growth	.83926	.85420
Total Summer Program	.90109	.90597

The response framework, using the certainty method, required respondents to make a directional judgement (agree, disagree) and a certainty judgement (from not very certain-1, to very certain-5) about their directional decision. An example of the response framework is shown below.

All men are created equal	Agree	1	2	3	4	5
	Disagree					

Conversion of the response values (i.e. A-5, A-4...) by the certainty method of scoring assumes that a greater difference exists between the responses occurring at the end of the scale than in the middle, and therefore, spreads the eleven point response to a 16-point scale (Warren et. al., 1969). Conversion to the 16-point scale is shown below.

Response Values	A5	A4	A3	A2	A1	AD	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5
Transferred Values	16	13	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	3	0

Statistical treatment of the data included tabulation of means, standard deviations, and percentages as descriptive statistics, and the t-test and correlations for comparison of data. Reliability coefficients were also calculated for the eight summer program activity categories and total summer program using a covariance matrix and ANOVA programs. The calculated reliability coefficients are shown in Table 1.

Results

Analysis of demographic data about teachers, superintendents, and their schools is reported in Table 2.

The means and standard deviations for the eight summer program activity categories and the total summer program are presented in Table 3 on a total sample and a subsample basis. As a total sample, respondents tended to emphasize activities that involved working with and being available to the participants in the youth and adult agriculture programs of the local school district. Teachers tended to place a great deal of importance upon the teacher improvement category of summer program activity, and also emphasized working with vocational agriculture students in the FFA and SOE programs. Superintendents recognized the importance of the SOE and FFA program activities and emphasized the need for resource improvement and departmental activities during the summer. It should be noted that all respondents placed little importance upon formal teaching type activities in structured settings as part of the summer program.

Table 2

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA CONCERNING THE TEACHER, SUPERINTENDENT,
AND SCHOOL AS REPORTED BY THE TEACHERS AND SUPERINTENDENTS

	<u>Teachers</u> Means/S.D.	<u>Superintendents</u> Means/S.D.
Number of Years in Present Position	9.97/8.93	12.91/8.71
Number of Vo-Ag Classes Taught Per Day	4.63/1.23	N/A
Enrollment in All-Day Vo-Ag Classes	70.28/58.45	N/A
Enrollment in Young/Adult Farmer Classes	61.47/83.40	N/A
Hours Per Week Devoted to Summer Program	45.58/11.88	N/A
Number of Teacher SOE Visits Per Student Per Year	2.68/1.38	N/A
Number of Students Receiving State Farmer Degrees Over the Last Five Years	8.11/11.87	N/A
*Frequency of Superintendents Accompanying Teachers on SOE Visits	N/A	.23/.82
Frequency of Superintendents Participating in Other Vo-Ag Activities	N/A	1.47/3.81
Frequency of Teacher-Superintendent Visits During the Summer	N/A	12.62/17.83

*Over 90 percent of all superintendents surveyed said they had never accompanied the vo-ag teacher on a SOE visit--many indicated they would be interested in doing so.

Table 3

MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND T-VALUES FOR THE EIGHT CATEGORIES OF SUMMER PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND THE TOTAL SUMMER PROGRAM

Activity	Total Sample ^a			Teachers ^b			Superintendents ^b			t-value
	Rank	Mean	S.D.	Rank	Mean	S.D.	Rank	Mean	S.D.	
FFA Program Activities	1	12.15	2.80	2	13.30	2.15	2.5	12.64	7.61	0.64
Departmental Administrative Activities	2	11.64	1.92	6	11.60	1.93	4	12.47	2.65	-1.96*
Supervised Occupational Experience (SOE) Program Activities	3	11.34	2.37	3	12.68	3.06	1	13.96	15.82	-0.62
Instructional Improvement Activities	4	11.11	3.07	5	11.71	3.92	5	11.28	4.92	0.59
Agriculture Organizations and Association Activities	5	11.02	2.02	4	12.00	2.92	8	10.56	1.69	3.41**
Professional Growth Activities	6	10.89	2.58	1	13.64	11.49	6	10.61	3.59	2.02*

Table 3, Continued

Resource Improvement Activities	7	$\frac{10.41}{2.61}$	7	$\frac{11.11}{3.07}$	2.5	$\frac{12.64}{11.77}$	-0.99
Teaching Activities	8	$\frac{8.95}{2.31}$	8	$\frac{10.64}{8.78}$	7	$\frac{11.20}{11.20}$	-0.30
Total Summer Program		$\frac{10.80}{1.93}$		$\frac{12.09}{3.34}$		$\frac{11.92}{4.49}$	0.22

*Significant at the .05 level (124 degrees of freedom--table value = 1.645).

**Significant at the .01 level (124 degrees of freedom--table value = 2.326).

^aThe total sample data represent all those teachers and superintendents who responded to the survey (N = 156 or 78 percent).

^bThe subsample data represent 63 teachers and 63 superintendents who had their school as a common factor (N = 63 or 63 percent matched pair response).

Teachers and superintendents differed significantly in their opinions concerning three categories of summer program activity. Those categories included the involvement of teachers in the summer activities of other agricultural organizations and associations, professional growth activities, and departmental administrative activities. Respondents tended to agree concerning the remaining five categories of summer program activity and the total summer program.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the analysis and interpretation of data in the study:

1. Iowa teachers and superintendents agree that the summer program of activities is an important phase of the total vocational agriculture program.
2. Iowa teachers and superintendents feel that the SOE and FFA activities are the backbone of a successful summer program of activities.
3. Iowa teachers and superintendents feel that structured teaching responsibilities are not part of the summer program of activities.
4. Iowa teachers feel the pressure of advanced degree requirements to maintain and further their positions.
5. Teachers need to develop active summer programs involving the vocational agriculture students and communicate that program to their community and administrators.

References

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