

Differences Between Length of Employment Contracts of Vocational Agriculture Teachers and Their Level of Involvement With FFA Activities

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The FFA, which was incorporated legislatively by Public Law 740 in 1950, is an intracurricular component for vocational education in agriculture. Hunsicker (1969) stated that the FFA organization has served effectively for more than 40 years to utilize and bring a second dimension, leadership, to vocational education in agriculture at the secondary level.

Many studies identifying the FFA as an important component of the vocational agriculture program have been conducted. Arrington and McCracken (1982), Cepica (1979), Ford (1970), Robinson (1976), Ward and Reynolds (1981), and Wineinger (1969) have conducted research that reported the need for vocational agriculture teachers at the secondary school level to be employed on 12-month contracts in order for the teachers to effectively conduct expected FFA activities. A 1976 study by Titsworth revealed that only 16 states had 100% of their vocational agriculture teachers employed on 12-month contracts.

Mr. Charles Keels, Chief Consultant of Agricultural Education, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, indicated that a change in the way local school districts were reimbursed for vocational agriculture positions occurred in North Carolina in 1969 that prompted several local education agencies to reduce the length of employment contracts for vocational agriculture teachers. Prior to 1969, the state reimbursed local school systems by individual teaching positions. Since 1969, local systems have been reimbursed for the total number of vocational education months their personnel were employed in the system the previous year rather than on the number of individual positions (C. L. Keels, personal communication, March 24, 1985).

From 1969 to 1983, local school systems had the option of assigning agricultural teachers to contracts with varying lengths between 10 and 12 months. Mr. Keels indicated that most of the reductions in contract lengths had occurred in school systems that had decided to treat vocational teachers the same way they did other academic teachers with regard to contract length. Mr. Keels further indicated that in the majority of cases, it was this factor that has resulted in reduced contracts for approximately 28% of North Carolina vocational agriculture teachers rather than reductions in contracts of weak teachers or any particular content area. The reductions occurred across the state and were not concentrated in particular geographical regions.

In 1982, only 72% of the vocational agriculture teachers in North Carolina were employed on 12-month contracts. State legislation was adopted in 1983 that directed local education administrators to continue to fund vocational agriculture teaching positions that were 12 months in 1983 as 12-month positions in 1983 and thereafter as long as the positions were maintained. While this legislation should serve as a mechanism to stop the eroding of contract lengths of additional vocational agriculture teaching positions to less than 12 months, evidence is needed to support the need for vocational agriculture teachers to be employed on 12-month contracts. Further, considering that the FFA is

legislatively mandated to be an intra-curricular component of the secondary vocational education program in agriculture, a need exists to examine the impact that the employment of vocational agriculture teachers on contracts of less than 12 months has on the level of teacher involvement with FFA activities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine if significant differences existed in the levels of involvement with FFA activities between North Carolina vocational agriculture teachers who were employed on 12-month contracts and those employed on less than 12-month contracts. More specifically, the objective of the study was to examine the differences in the level of involvement between vocational agriculture teachers employed on 12-month contracts and those employed on less than 12-month contracts, as measured by:

1. Participation in FFA chapter award programs: National Chapter, National Chapter Safety, Cooperative Activity, and Building Our American Communities (BOAC).
2. FFA chapter participation in International FFA programs.
3. Whether the FFA chapter conducted an annual FFA parent/member banquet.
4. FFA member participation in FFA Prepared Public Speaking and Extemporaneous Public Speaking contests.
5. FFA member participation in FFA activities conducted during the summer months: State FFA Convention, State FFA Leadership School, and FFA Camping Program.
6. FFA member participation in the Texas Gulf and Alpha Gamma Rho FFA Scholarship Programs.
7. The number of FFA members receiving State Farmer and American Farmer degrees.
8. The number of agricultural proficiency award medals presented on the chapter level and the number of agricultural proficiency applications submitted on the federation level.
9. The number of FFA contests in which the FFA chapters participated.
10. The percentage of vocational agriculture enrollment classified as FFA members.

Methodology

The population for the study consisted of all vocational agriculture teachers employed in North Carolina for the 1981-82 school year. The population consisted of a total of 434 teachers.

The "End-of-Year Report for Secondary Vocational Agriculture" form, which is used by the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, Division of Vocational Education to solicit information for statewide program planning and evaluation, was used to collect the data. The form listed all FFA activities considered to be of major importance to the statewide FFA leadership and awards program.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether their FFA chapter had participated in FFA activities such as the state FFA convention, state FFA leadership school, FFA camping program, FFA prepared and extemporaneous public speaking contests, national chapter award program, national chapter safety award program, Building Our American Communities award program, agricultural cooperative activity chapter award program, international FFA programs, or FFA scholarship programs sponsored by Texas Gulf and Alpha Gamma Rho. They were also asked to indicate whether they had conducted an FFA parent-member banquet. In addition to indicating whether their FFA chapter had participated in or conducted the selected FFA activities, the respondents were asked to indicate their chapter's degree of involvement by indicating the number of FFA chapter members who had participated in the various activities, when appropriate.

The instrument was mailed with a cover letter to the research population. Six weeks after the initial mailing, a follow-up letter was sent to nonrespondents. One month after the follow-up letter was mailed, a personal appeal was issued at the Annual Vocational Agriculture Teachers Conference for any nonrespondents to complete and return their survey forms. Since Chi square and t-test statistics indicated that there was no significant difference in the data received from late respondents and that received from the initial respondents, the data were combined for analysis. Two hundred ninety, or 66.82%, of the 434 teachers making up the research population returned a completed research instrument. This return rate compared favorably with that reported in the nationwide vocational education study conducted by Enginer (1965).

Since the study included the entire population and subjects were not randomly selected, descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and percentages were used as the primary statistics to analyze the data. In addition, the Chi Square and t-test statistics were used to provide a statistical index of the magnitude of the difference found in the level of involvement between the teachers employed for 12 months and those employed for less than 12 months.

Findings

This study examined the difference between the length of employment contracts of North Carolina vocational agriculture teachers and their level of involvement with FFA activities. The majority, 222 or 76.55%, of the respondents were vocational agriculture teachers employed on 12-month contracts. Only 68 or 23.45% were teachers employed on less than 12-month contracts. With regard to the length of employment contracts, the respondents compared favorably with the total study population in that 72% of all North Carolina vocational agriculture teachers were employed on 12-month contracts in 1981-82.

Data in Table 1 indicate that the percentage of teachers who participated in or conducted each of the 16 FFA activities studied was greater for the teachers employed on 12-month contracts than for teachers employed on less than 12-month contracts. The percentage of involvement was significantly greater, at the .05 level of significance, for the teachers on 12-month contracts than those for less than 12 months for four activities: State FFA Convention, National Chapter Safety Award Program, Agricultural Cooperative Activity Chapter Award Program, and International FFA Programs. Since the state FFA convention is held during the summer months in North Carolina, lower convention attendance by teachers on less than 12-month contracts would be expected. However, the data indicated that participation in the state FFA leadership school and the FFA camping program, which are also conducted during the summer months, was not significantly greater for 12-month employed teachers than for those employed for less than 12 months.

Table 1

Percentage and Chi Square Statistics for Involvement of Vocational Agriculture Teachers in Major FFA Activities by Length of Employment Contract, 12-Month and Less Than 12-Month

FFA Activity	12-month	<12-month	Chi Square
	N=222 %	N=68 %	
State FFA convention	88.29	61.76	25.801**
Prepared FFA public speaking	76.58	63.24	5.174
Parent/member banquet	75.68	64.71	3.529
National chapter award program	49.09	39.71	2.072
State FFA leadership school	44.14	36.76	1.056
BOAC chapter award program	42.79	29.41	3.500
FFA camping program	39.64	27.94	2.943
National chapter safety award program	39.64	20.59	8.134**
Extemporaneous FFA public speaking	35.14	22.06	3.998
Cooperative activity chapter award program	19.37	7.35	5.211*
Texas Gulf/FFA Scholarship program	9.91	5.88	0.958
International FFA programs	9.46	1.47	4.615*
Alpha Gamma Rho/FFA Scholarship program	3.15	2.94	0.004

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Data from Table 1 also show that the Parent/member Banquet was the FFA activity that drew the largest percentage of involvement from teachers who were employed on less than 12-month contracts, with 64.71% indicating that their FFA chapters were involved with the activity. The activity was the third most popular activity for the teachers employed on 12-month contracts with 75.68% indicating that they conducted a parent/member banquet. The Prepared FFA Public Speaking Contest was the second most popular FFA activity for both groups of teachers, with 63.24% of those employed for less than 12 months and 76.58% of those employed for 12 months indicating that they participated in the activity. The involvement with the Prepared FFA Public Speaking Contest was sharply contrasted by involvement with the Extemporaneous FFA Public Speaking Contest. Only 22.06% of teachers employed on less than 12-month contracts and 35.14% of those employed for 12-month indicated FFA chapters were involved with the extemporaneous contest.

Table 1 data also illustrate that less than 10% of the FFA chapters for either group of teachers, 12-month employed or less than 12-month employed, participated in three of the state's major FFA activities: FFA International Programs, Texas Gulf/FFA Scholarship Program, and Alpha Gamma Rho/FFA Scholarship Program. The data also indicated that less than half of each of the two groups of teachers participated in the four North Carolina sanctioned FFA chapter award programs: National Chapter, National Chapter Safety, Building Our American Communities, and Agricultural Cooperative Activity.

Table 2 presents a summary of analyzed data based on the quantitative measures of FFA chapter involvement, as measured by the number

of students participating, by length of employment contracts of the vocational agriculture teachers. Twelve-month employed teachers had a higher level of FFA chapter activity involvement than did the teachers employed for less than 12 months for all activities studied. The Number of FFA Chapter Members Participating in the State FFA Convention, Number of FFA Chapter Members Participating in the FFA Camping Program, Number of FFA Contests in Which FFA Chapter Participated, Number of FFA Chapter Award Programs in Which FFA Chapter Participated, Number of State Farmer Degree Recipients, Number of Agricultural Proficiency Awards Submitted on Federation Level, and Average Percentage of Vocational Agriculture Enrollment Classified as FFA Members were all significantly greater at the .01 level of significance for teachers employed on 12-month contracts than for the teachers employed on less than 12-month contracts.

Table 2

Comparison of Level of Involvement of Vocational Agriculture Teachers in Major FFA Activities by Length of Employment Contract, 12-Month and Less Than 12-Month

FFA Activity	<u>12-Month</u> <u>M</u>	<u><12-Month</u> <u>M</u>	<u>t</u>
Average percentage of vocational agriculture enrollment classified as FFA members	77.66	57.05	4.33*
Agricultural proficiency award medals presented on chapter level	10.54	9.52	1.10
FFA chapter members participating in the FFA camping program	8.09	2.70	3.71*
FFA contests in which FFA chapter participated	8.07	3.36	4.39*
FFA chapter members participating in the state FFA convention	7.50	4.22	4.28*
Agricultural proficiency award applications submitted on federation level	4.42	1.69	4.63*
State farmer degree recipients	2.70	1.23	2.83*
FFA chapter members participating in the state FFA leadership school	1.57	1.06	1.70
FFA chapter award programs in which FFA chapter participated	1.54	0.99	3.03*
American farmer degree recipients	0.34	0.27	0.71

* $p < .01$.

Data in Table 2 indicated that 12-month employed teachers averaged having more than twice the number of State Farmer Degree recipients than did those teachers employed on less than 12-month contracts. Students taught by the 12-month employed teachers averaged 2.70 State Farmer Degrees, and students taught by the less than 12-month employed teachers averaged receiving 1.23 State Farmer Degrees per year.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of this study. FFA chapters of teachers employed on 12-month contracts have a higher level of involvement in the FFA activities. Teachers employed for 12 months have a higher level of involvement in FFA activities than the teachers who are employed for less than 12 months. A higher percentage of FFA members participate in FFA activities when their vocational agriculture teachers are 12-month employed teachers than for teachers employed for less than 12 months. A positive relationship exists between teachers employed on 12-month contracts and the level of involvement with FFA activities.

Recommendations

Twelve month employment should be provided to all North Carolina vocational agriculture teachers in order for them to effectively conduct FFA activities during the summer months.

Efforts should be made by the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction Agricultural Education staff to encourage more vocational agriculture teachers to participate in the major state sanctioned FFA activities.

Further research should be conducted to determine why less than 50% of the vocational agriculture teachers in North Carolina are involved, as measured by FFA chapter/member participation, in the FFA camping, extemporaneous FFA public speaking, national chapter award, national chapter safety award, Building Our American Communities (BOAC) chapter award, cooperative activity chapter award, and the Texas Gulf and Alpha Gamma Rho FFA scholarship programs.

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