

A WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND
DISTRIBUTIVE EDUCATION

Richard Ashmun*

(There is need for practical suggestions for training programs in farm-related occupations. Dr. Ashmun provides them for each grade level and for a wide spectrum of opportunities found in most high schools.-Editor

Philosophy and Objectives-
Secondary School Agricultural Education

Instruction in vocational agriculture at the secondary school level is no doubt the most widely known of all vocational agriculture programs. The program has grown rapidly since 1900, with most growth coming after World War II. This was probably due to ease of administration and adaptability to existing educational philosophies.

One cannot look at educational programs without first looking at the philosophy and objectives underlying a program. Vocational agriculture seems to have its roots in the community-school philosophy. This is characterized by the belief in unrestricted educational opportunity for all our people, and that the school is an integral part of the community it serves. Peterson states, "In short, the community school is dedicated to the idea that all of the people in its service area have a claim on its educational resources to the end that they achieve their potential. The community school is sensitive to the educational needs of those who will remain in the community and those who leave." Even though this philosophy is basic, not enough schools in our educational system have adopted it as a practicing philosophy.

The overall purpose of agricultural education in the public schools is to provide educational opportunity in agriculture. The high school program achieves this purpose by attempting to help students develop competencies or outcomes in five major areas. The five areas are:

1. To develop an appreciation and understanding of modern agriculture and rural life.
2. To develop citizenship and leadership.
3. To provide supervised work experience in agriculture at the operational and managerial levels.

*Dr. Richard Ashmun will become Assistant Professor of Distributive Education at the University of Minnesota in September this year. He was formerly Supervisor of the School of Marketing at the Vocational-Technical Adult School at Madison, Wisconsin.

*Journal of the American Association of
Teacher Educators in Agriculture
Volume 6, Number 1, pp.10-19
DOI: 10.5032/jaatea.1965.01010*

4. To make a beginning in an agricultural pursuit commensurate with individual capacity, interest and opportunity.
5. To prepare for further study in agriculture at the vocational-technical or collegiate level.

Instruction is offered to the student through the three mediums of the classroom, supervised work experience and the Future Farmers of America. Each medium contributes significantly to the development of the student. It is interesting to note at this point that the three mediums of instruction in distributive education of the classroom, supervised work experience, and the Distributive Education Clubs of America, closely parallel the three mediums of agricultural education.

It appears evident that there is a strong, well-organized program of agricultural education at the high school level. The problem is that many students will not obtain employment on the farm itself. Many will seek and find employment in farm-related occupations which also require a strong background of agricultural training. Skare and Hartog, in the May, 1966 issue of the Minnesota Journal of Education, indicate that the mere existence of career opportunities in agri-business and agri-distribution doesn't mean farm youth will be able to fill these positions. There is need for further training to prepare farm youth for these positions which require the acquisition of new understandings and skills which are currently in demand. The major handicap in acquiring these new understandings and skills seems to be a lack of "push" from home, as well as a lack of opportunity to obtain the needed training in the public schools. Until the present time, very little has been done to help students receive training in farm-related occupations. The outlook is beginning to brighten as more schools adopt new programs, and as new staff become available to fill the teaching positions.

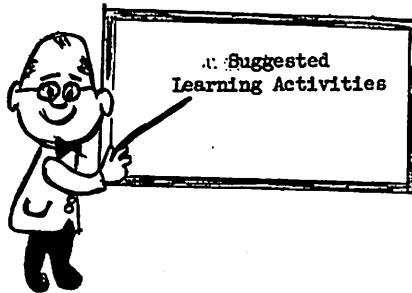
There is a need to expand existing programs in vocational agriculture and distributive education to better prepare students for the changing world of work. There is a need to work cooperatively with other vocational education services to offer the kind of educational programs which would best prepare students for the various occupational opportunities. This is probably done best at the high school level by preparing students for "clusters" of occupations rather than for specific, narrow, highly specialized occupations. The next section of this exposition will be devoted to some suggestions as to how distributive education procedures could be adapted in agricultural education in order to plan and carry out occupational training at the high school level. These suggestions will be limited to those occupational categories requiring skills and knowledge in the two fields. The fact should not be overlooked that there are numerous possibilities for the coordination of effort with other vocational services such as trades and industry, home economics, etc.

**Implications For Agricultural Education
And Distributive Education**

The existing philosophy of agricultural education can be utilized to suggest activities and programs at the high school level which combine agricultural and distributive skills. These suggestions will be limited to the kinds of occupations which include agricultural and distributive skills. These ideas should assist in preparing young people for employment whether they intend to graduate from high school, or whether they intend to drop out of school before graduation. Many of these methods can be incorporated into existing agricultural education classes, capitalizing on subject matter that is now part of the curriculum. At the secondary levels, eleventh and twelfth grades, separate occupational training classes could be established.

The emphasis in the classes should be vocational in nature, with methods used that help develop vocational skills. Mental power, or learning and intelligence, does not come about by means of a particular subject. Learning is achieved through the methods employed in teaching the subject matter. Mental growth depends primarily on how a subject is taught and on the emphasis in its teaching.

It is evident that stress should be placed on participation kinds of learning activities requiring a high degree of student involvement. Several activities will be suggested in the following paragraphs. The activities are devised to correspond to the age level of the students. The reader should not overlook the importance of teacher-pupil planning in the use of these activities.



NINTH GRADE The ninth grade boy who is enrolled in an agricultural education class is probably getting his first exposure to classroom instruction in agriculture. At this age, the student likes participating in activities where he can see concrete results. He likes active participation. It is also the time when he should be examining various occupations from which to make a career choice. One good activity would be for the student to conduct a field interview with a representative of the state employment service, a personnel manager, a business owner or manager, or the school counselor. The interviews should be conducted to obtain

information on the kinds of occupations requiring agricultural and distributive skills. The information can be obtained on a prepared interview form to get the most pertinent information, save time, and give the student confidence. Each student should write up his interview in narrative form and give an oral report to the class so all students would benefit from the effort. A file could be kept of the written reports so other students in future classes could also benefit from the activity, as well as the agricultural teacher, the distributive teacher, and the school counselor. The student benefits from ego-involvement, while the school benefits from the contacts in the community. Business and agriculture benefit in the long run from receiving employees who have made a career choice.

This is the age where the boy becomes interested in a self-concept. A useful activity would be to write an essay on the personality requirements for certain farm-related occupations in business and distribution. This should be followed by an informal self-analysis. The student should attempt to list his own personality traits, positive and negative, and begin a plan for self-improvement if he felt he lacked certain characteristics for his desired goal. It may also be possible to tie this in with the ninth grade unit on occupations. It would help give the student some insight into the world of work, as well as developing his self-concept in relation to an occupational goal. The teacher could also get some idea about the student's stereotypes of the people in the farm-related occupations.

It may also be helpful at this time to use the distributive education teacher-coordinator as a resource speaker. He could describe what is meant by distributive occupations and give examples of those which require a background in agriculture. He could explain the distributive program in detail, as well as to give the students directions on how and when to enter the program. He could acquaint them with the necessary program requirements, and how the agricultural education teacher can help them in determining career opportunities in farm-related business and distributive occupations. He could also point out how some of the training they are receiving will be needed for success in many of the distributive occupations.

Another activity would be to have committees of students plan and construct bulletin board displays on products and occupations involving these products. For example, one committee may plan and develop a display on the various types of products that are required by on-farm personnel. They could collect pictures from magazines, catalogs, and from local businesses. Incorporated into the display would be examples of occupations involving these products; such as a buyer, equipment demonstrator, sales and service specialist, service consultant, and management personnel.

The students may become very interested in actually demonstrating products before the class. This could involve such things as feed and seed products, fertilizers, health aids for animals, equipment and parts, etc. They would be learning in a very basic way one of the salesperson's necessary skills, that of effectively demonstrating products in an appealing, realistic way. A great deal of skill is required to learn the strengths and weaknesses of products so they can be presented in the most honest, describable way. The teacher could point out at the same time the types of

techniques used in various occupations that require demonstration as part of the duties. In some communities it may be possible to actually observe persons in these occupations at work. Bringing one of them into the classroom as a resource speaker would also be helpful.

Field trips can be used effectively at the ninth grade level. Most students enjoy seeing things in their natural settings. Most firms are very willing to share information with students.

TENTH GRADE The tenth grade boy enrolled in agricultural education classes is continuing his search for a self-concept. He is developing an understanding of the family and its relationships. He is probably more conscious of the work role of the parents. He may be earning money from jobs on the farm, or in one of the industries. He may also receive an allowance. This provides an income which brings the student into the role as a consumer. By making purchases he comes in contact with many distributive occupations.

An activity requiring involvement would be to have each boy do some comparison shopping. A guide should be developed through group effort, and used as a basis for completing a shopping report. The report would contain such things as prices, quality, displays, demonstrations, techniques, and how the student was handled by the salesperson. Each student could give an oral report on his particular experience. The written report should be filed for future use by teachers or students. This type of activity would develop an insight into the problems as a consumer, as well as the job of the salesperson. It would also permit exposure to a business environment and its many complexities. The shopping report could be followed by a panel discussion on the types of jobs and persons encountered who were employed in jobs requiring a combination of agricultural and distributive skills. The panel could discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each job, pay scales, work environment, personality traits, etc. that they thought were indicative of the job. This would give them a chance to start testing their self-concept against actual occupational categories.

More extensive field trips could be taken by this group. For example, the group could visit a farm equipment dealer to see first-hand what kinds of merchandise were stocked, how it is displayed, information needed and the process involved from manufacture to the final purchase. It would be wise to have the students plan the trip under the supervision of the teacher. The trip could be followed by a classroom discussion on what was observed. It might be helpful to have the students prepare a list of questions beforehand to serve as a guide during the trip, and as a basis for discussion following the trip.

The tenth grade boy is interested in self-analysis. The teacher, possibly with the help of the school counselor, could assist the students in assessing their interests, aptitudes, abilities, and values. Written tests could be used to help the students develop a self-concept. If these were not available, the teacher should present

certain guides to follow in assessing such things as personality, habits, attitudes, interests, etc. The student's self-concept, based on analysis of results, would be compared with worker characteristics as learned from the shopping report, field trip, or the panel discussion. The students would be able to consciously or unconsciously compare themselves with those persons in the work situation. As the saying goes, "If the shoe fits, put it on."

Case problems are useful to gain an insight into such things as credit, co-worker relations, employer-employee relations, business mathematics, or money management problems. If the case problems are constructed properly, the student would gain consumer information and information about the occupational field. For example, a case problem could be built around the use of farm credit. This would involve the application for credit, interest charges, action for nonpayment, etc. which most persons come in contact with at one time or another in their lives. Role concepts can be formed. It is important that these role concepts are accurately and realistically portrayed. The distributive education teacher could assist in the construction of these case problems if the agricultural teacher desired this type of assistance. This would bring the two teachers together in a professional way. Another good source of cases would be the advisory committee, or possibly the businessmen themselves.

ELEVENTH GRADE The eleventh grade boy is developing a sense of direction, is interested in vocational planning, and quite concerned about personal relationships. He must now be thinking seriously about and beginning to prepare for an acceptable occupation.

The student would still be enrolled in an agricultural course, and could also enroll in the preparatory distributive education course as an elective, if it were offered, to begin learning the necessary skills for agri-business or agri-distribution. He would be in both the agriculture and distributive class. Projects could be devised which combine the skills in the two areas. For example, when studying business cycles and trends, students could examine the cyclical fluctuations of farm-related products and their implications for all related industries, plus the effects on the various persons involved. Boys at this age level are impressed with persons who are successful in their careers. A series of case studies could be developed around local persons who are considered to be successful in their occupations in farm-related careers. The teacher could obtain this information, or the students could gather it themselves through field interviews. The case studies should be followed by having such successful persons in these occupations appear before the class as resource speakers to discuss the aspects of the job, for example, training needed, satisfactions derived, promotional route, turnover, effects on social and family life, values in life, etc. This would provide the students with actual role models from the occupation. It is one more way to test a self-concept against reality. The student learns about the job, as well as whether it is possible to prepare for the occupation as a lifetime career.

A team teaching situation could be organized for this group between the agricultural teacher and the distributive teacher. This could be done by combining the two classes, or having them meet separately. It is possible for the agricultural class and the preparatory class to culminate units on merchandise information and farm products at about the same time. The two classes could then meet together for the demonstration phase of the unit.

Distributive education students in the cooperative program give sales demonstrations in the classroom to practice what they have learned. This is a role-playing situation that should be as realistic as possible. The distributive education students need customers for these demonstrations. The agricultural students could role-play the parts of the customers. They would be required to use their background of consumer information to question the salesperson. They would act as true customers to permit the distributive student to use the skills and knowledge he had learned in salesmanship. In this way, both groups would benefit from the experience.

Evaluations of the roles should be undertaken by the agricultural teacher, the distributive teacher, and the students from both classes. The activity would serve as a device to allow students to experience a realistic salesperson-customer relationship, as well as to expose both groups to some of the problems arising in the sales process. It may even be possible to reverse the roles, permitting the agricultural student to play the role of the salesperson. This would provide an opportunity to test a self-concept in two different roles.

It is possible at the eleventh, as well as the twelfth grade, to coordinate the activities of the local chapters of the Future Farmers of America and the Distributive Education Clubs of America. Both groups are very active in school and community affairs. They could cooperate in conducting a customer survey of buying habits of farm persons and metropolitan persons. This would provide valuable consumer information for the students, as well as insights into the merchandising process. This type of activity would expose both groups to the community. It could even provide a service to local businesses.

Another cooperative activity would be in learning parliamentary procedure. The FFA typically does an excellent job in this area. DECA students could learn and capitalize from the experience of the FFA members.

Both clubs could cooperate in fund raising activities as well. Both need funds to carry out their various activities. Division of the funds raised could be carried out through a predetermined plan. Social functions should not be overlooked. Possibly other clubs, such as the FHA, could meet together for dances, skating parties, bowling, or hay rides.

Students at this grade level are concerned about earning money. There are opportunities for part-time employment in the community. There are possibilities such as selling during peak periods, summer vacations, holiday seasons, after school, or on Saturday. This may be difficult for the agricultural student, especially if he has on-farm duties. However, it should not be overlooked as a possibility. Job placement could be made through the employment service, the school counselor, the distributive teacher, or the agricultural teacher.

TWELFTH GRADE The twelfth grade student is normally better able to make decisions and take responsibility. He is more mature in respect to judgmental skills. He is better able to make satisfactory adjustments in terms of choices, attitudes, values, and the role as an adult. He is concerned about a career choice, whether it be on the farm or in a related career, or something entirely different. Therefore, he should be involved in activities which enhance and supplement a career choice.

A case should be made at this point for schools to operate a cooperative program. Cooperative part-time training is a method of education which employs learning experiences in the school and work experience made available in some cooperating agency outside the school. It is a method to bridge the gap between the theory and practice. The student usually spends part of the day in school and part of the day on the job. However, it would be possible to obtain the experience at other times as well, e.g. during summers, on a split-term basis, internship basis, etc. The work experience phase of the program is supervised closely by a coordinator who makes certain the training is appropriate for the occupational goal of the student. He does this by setting up a plan of experiences with the employer. This plan is based on a job analysis of the occupation in which the student is seeking employment. This fulfills the requirement that the curriculum be based on job analysis and evidence of employment opportunities. The occupational experience is evaluated periodically by the coordinator to determine job progress, application of skills, job behavior, and the amount of experience as listed in the plan.

It would seem the cooperative part-time program would be ideal for the agricultural student who is seeking employment in a farm-related occupation. He would have an opportunity to put classroom learning into practice. The classroom and job phases of the program are devoted to learning skills in career development, occupational adjustment, and technical competencies. Many of the basic skills and technical skills could be learned in the agricultural classes. These would be tied together and built upon in the cooperative class, as well as on the job.

Employment opportunities for agricultural students could be determined through the joint efforts of the agricultural teacher and the distributive teacher. Coordination activities could be carried out jointly, or by the person designated as the coordinator.

Learning activities in the classroom should be coordinated with the job on a group and individual basis. For example, projects can be developed such as merchandise manuals, an analysis of the job, self-analysis, inventory methods, critical incidents, etc. In addition, job study guides could be used to learn about a specific job, such as implement sales or parts service for implements.

The student should be given the opportunity to participate in problem-solving kinds of activities. This can be done through appropriate case problems, or through the use of business games. The business game is actually a continuing case problem in which the student makes certain management decisions after carefully analyzing facts and background information. The business game is usually built around management problems involving sales, buying, pricing, inventory, etc. In addition, students should be exposed to the management concept through appropriate resource speakers, field interviews, role-playing, case studies, and case problems. There is also an opportunity to discuss problems which arise on the job. If the student experiences a problem during an afternoon at work, he should have an opportunity to discuss this problem in class the next day. If it was a personal problem, a case conference could be held with the teacher.

Once again, the team teaching approach would be useful. The agricultural teacher could assist in teaching concepts related to agricultural marketing, while the distributive teacher assists in the area of general marketing. The agricultural teacher can serve as a consultant for the students who develop projects built around agricultural practices. It is even possible the types of projects could be developed through the joint efforts of both teachers. Teachers in both subjects would have responsibilities for completion of the projects.

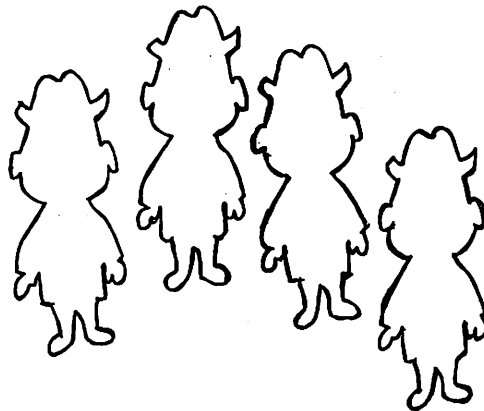
There are many other ways in which the skills necessary in the two fields could be coordinated. The important thing is that each field should recognize the contributions that can be made through coordinated efforts. There will no doubt be more crossing of departmental lines in the future. The student would be the person who would benefit from such a coordination of effort. Employers would also benefit by obtaining an employee who was better trained and more productive to the firm. The community benefits from a satisfied, contributing member to its society.

Summary

An attempt has been made in this short paper to suggest some ways in which agricultural education and distributive education can work together to meet the needs of students requiring occupational skills in the two areas. The training is necessary whether a student goes into employment after graduation and training, or whether he is the victim of circumstances and drops out of school. The dropout would at least have some training, while the graduate would gain further understanding into his career goals.

Continuous surveys, job analyses, and follow-up studies are necessary to determine the needs for training in both major areas. This can be done as a cooperative venture.

The important area of supervision has not been touched in this paper. Adequate, effective supervision is necessary from the national level down to the local level. Leadership must come from some source. Many more schools would probably be willing to establish combination programs if there were more specific guidelines. These are slowly being developed, but more concerted effort is needed. We have the framework in the Vocational Act of 1963. Now all we need is action!



Entrepreneural
Training Pays!

- # If spent properly, the time consumed by worrying could solve the problem.
- # When a person takes responsibility he is moving on thin ice —
But at least he's moving.
- # If you really want to enjoy life, the best thing to do is help someone else enjoy it too.
- # It is a rare man that finds himself before he dies . . . Emerson
It is a rarer man that lives before he dies . . . Hammond