



Some needed improvements in the Montana vocational agriculture program
by D L MacDonald

A THESIS Submitted to the Graduate Committee In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science In Agricultural Education
Montana State University
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Abstract:

The program in vocational agriculture in Montana has been reviewed. The early program as developed up to 1924 is described and its weaknesses noted. An ideal program is described, showing that the present program needs to be improved by emphasizing the establishment of students in farming for themselves, by improving the teacher training program in technical agriculture so as to meet the needs of the agriculture teacher. Principal emphasis of this thesis was based on the opinions of 282 farmers as to the relative value of jobs their boys would be taught in school and also on a survey of the skills possessed by 38 vocational agriculture teachers to do the common farm jobs. The study brings out that farmers are of the opinion that many farm skills should be taught which are now being neglected and some non-functioning subject matter should be removed from the vocational agriculture course of study. Some of the skills the farmers believe should be taught are the veterinary jobs such as treating for bloat, lice, and milk fever. The selection of male and female breeding stock is of more importance to these farmers than knowing how to judge livestock according to show ring classification. In crop production the farmers are of the opinion that knowing how to control weeds and pests, and make machinery adjustments and repairs is of more importance to a farmer than botany of plants or history of grain varieties. The group rated all the farm management and conservation skills very high. The results of the survey on the ability of vocational agriculture teachers to do the farm skills indicates that the teacher training program in technical agriculture will have to be altered if the wishes of the farmers are to be regarded. It is recommended in this study that undergraduates be given the opportunity to learn the farm skills as well as the principles of scientific agriculture while in college. A suggested course of study that includes the skills to be taught is partially developed. It is recommended that the supervisors and teacher trainers work with the vocational agriculture instructors in developing a course of study that will contain more functioning subject matter as indicated by the opinions of the farmers. Establishment in farming of the students in vocational agriculture can be further improved by giving the trainees more actual experience in working with part-time classes and by the preparation of teaching material that will meet the needs of the group.

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D. L. MacDONALD

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Abstract

The program in vocational agriculture in Montana has been reviewed. The early program as developed up to 1924 is described and its weaknesses noted. An ideal program is described, showing that the present program needs to be improved by emphasizing the establishment of students in farming for themselves, by improving the content of the teaching program in all-day classes, and by improving the teacher training program in technical agriculture so as to meet the needs of the agriculture teacher.

Principal emphasis of this thesis was based on the opinions of 287 farmers as to the relative value of jobs their boys would be taught in school and also on a survey of the skills possessed by 38 vocational agriculture teachers to do the common farm jobs.

The study brings out that farmers are of the opinion that many farm skills should be taught which are now being neglected and some non-functioning subject matter should be removed from the vocational agriculture course of study. Some of the skills the farmers believe should be taught are the veterinary jobs such as treating for bloat, lice, and milk fever. The selection of male and female breeding stock is of more importance to these farmers than knowing how to judge livestock according to show ring classification. In crop production the farmers are of the opinion that knowing how to control weeds and pests, and make machinery adjustments and repairs is of more importance to a farmer than botany of plants or history of grain varieties. The group rated all the farm management and conservation skills very high.

The results of the survey on the ability of vocational agriculture teachers to do the farm skills indicates that the teacher training program in technical agriculture will have to be altered if the wishes of the farmers are to be regarded. It is recommended in this study that undergraduates be given the opportunity to learn the farm skills as well as the principles of scientific agriculture while in college.

A suggested course of study that includes the skills to be taught is partially developed. It is recommended that the supervisors and teacher trainers work with the vocational agriculture instructors in developing a course of study that will contain more functioning subject matter as indicated by the opinions of the farmers. Establishment in farming of the students in vocational agriculture can be further improved by giving the trainees more actual experience in working with part-time classes and by the preparation of teaching material that will meet the needs of this group.

Historical

When a person analyzes the term "vocational agriculture" he considers that this term means training for the practice of agriculture. We all know that in the agricultural occupations there are many farm jobs that are essentially manipulative skills and that a training program of vocational agriculture should contain practice in learning how to do these manipulative and managerial skills in an approved way and in a true-to-life situation.

The early teacher of agriculture did not teach the subject from the vocational viewpoint of learning by doing. Instead, the textbook was followed very closely, the teacher assigning a certain number of pages each day without regard to type of agriculture found in the community or on the boy's farm.

It is not meant by the writer to show any contempt for agricultural textbooks because they are needed in teaching vocational agriculture. But they should not be used as a basic text for the course, because of the individual or localized problems of the boys who are members of the vocational agriculture classes.

Of the 2,175 schools which reported teaching agriculture for the year ending June 16, 1916, 1,521 reported that they taught it as an informational subject primarily (1). In a few cases there would be some laboratory experiments and outdoor observations given to supplement the material in the agricultural texts. But specific farm jobs or skills were seldom done by

(1) Summaries of Studies in Agricultural Education, 1935. 195 pages. U. S. Office of Education, Department of the Interior. Vocational Education Bulletin #180.

