

## What's In a Name?

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This is a time in which terminology used by the profession has become muddled. There is an old adage that makes reference to "what's in a name!" To many individuals, a name or a name change does not appear to make much difference. However, the misuse or incorrect use of a name can have a very devastating effect upon the meaning and interpretation of a program, especially an educational program which is currently fighting an image problem. A review of recent literature prepared either for or by the profession reveals the confusion arising from the misuse of terminology to describe vocational education programs in agriculture at the secondary level.

In order to establish a framework for discussion, the following examples are cited to illustrate how imprecise or incorrect use of terminology can be misleading:

Example 1: The "NVATA Task Force on Legislation" (1987) describes vocational education programs in agriculture at the secondary level as follows:

"Agricultural education is a program founded upon a sound philosophical base."

"The agricultural education program is a core curriculum aimed at preparing individuals for entrepreneurship or employment."

"The future of American agriculture resides in the youth of our nation and their involvement in agricultural education programs."

Furthermore, reference is made in this same task force report to a "secondary agricultural education program teacher", a "postsecondary agricultural education teacher" and an "adult agricultural education program teacher". By using this terminology, the task force implies agricultural education is only involved with and in secondary and postsecondary public education, including adult education. Is this implication correct? Is this terminology confusing and open to many interpretations?

Example 2: The minutes of the October 1987 meeting of the National Council for Vocational and Technical Education in Agriculture reveals the use of terminology interchangeably when addressing an item of business on the "Committee on Internationalizing Agricultural Education in the U.S.A."

One motion used the term ". . . into the agricultural education curriculum."

In another motion on the same item of business, the term ". . .into the vocational agriculture curriculum" was used.

Which terminology is proper and correct? To which curricula is reference made?

Example 3: The concern of proper terminology is further complicated by reference to "agriscience" and "agriscience teacher". This terminology is being promoted through the National FFA Foundation, Inc. sponsored project (1987) designed to recognize those teachers who do the best job annually of infusing science into their curriculum.

Is this a new instructional program and a new kind of teacher, or merely a change of terms to describe the infusing of science into the vocational agriculture curriculum?

Example 4: On the horizon is yet another program descriptor emerging, that being "agrimarketing teacher" (Leising, 1987). Is this a new program of instruction, or only a new term coined to stress the teaching of agricultural marketing in vocational education programs in agriculture?

Example 5: In proposed amendments (1988) to the National FFA Constitution and By-laws, it is being recommended that the words "vocational agriculture" be substituted with the words "agricultural education".

What impact will this substitution of words have upon the FFA program? As Warmbrod (1987) stated, "...only cosmetic alterations in the name, ceremonies, and creed of the students' organization does little to change either the perception or the reality of the 'Future Farmers of America'" (p. 4).

Finally, there are individuals within the profession who believe that the term "agricultural education" is commonly used as a descriptor of teacher education in agriculture, state supervision in agriculture, and teaching in support of vocational agriculture (Agricultural Education Division Policy Committee, 1985). Those who profess to this terminology believe that agricultural education is not a descriptor of vocational education programs in agriculture at the secondary level; and agricultural education, per se, does not exist as an educational program in public secondary education.

It is apparent that one of the critical concerns facing the agricultural education profession today deals with terminology and the confusion caused by the substitution of terms haphazardly.

#### The Issue

Obviously, the terms "vocational agriculture" and "agricultural education" are being used interchangeably to describe instructional programs in agriculture at the secondary level. Should they be? This is one of the issues confronting the profession. The issue to be addressed then becomes:

Should vocational education programs in agriculture offered in public secondary schools be referred to as vocational agriculture, or should they be referred to as agricultural education?

The remainder of this article will be devoted to attempting to resolve this issue by demonstrating that the terms vocational agriculture and

agricultural education are not synonymous. It will be argued further that the term agricultural education is much broader and more inclusive than the specific program termed vocational agriculture.

In order to resolve the issue at hand, it is necessary to define the term "agriculture". Once this has been achieved, it is then essential to suggest a working definition of "agricultural education". Reference is made to a National Academy of Sciences study completed in 1971 on agricultural education to establish a definition of agriculture.

The agricultural sector includes supply and service functions involving agricultural inputs; production of agricultural commodities; processing and distribution of agricultural products; use, conservation, development and management of air, land, and water resources; development and maintenance of rural recreational and aesthetic resources; and related economic, sociological, political, environmental and behavior functions (National Academy of Sciences, 1971, p. 7).

Utilizing the broad definition of agriculture, it is now appropriate to define agricultural education in similarly broad terms as was done by the National Academy of Sciences in 1971.

Agricultural education encompasses all educational processes, activities and programs associated with (in and about)\* agriculture. Agricultural education blends the applied sciences of agriculture with the applied behavioral sciences of education. Agricultural education: (a) is as broad as, and contributes to all aspects of education; (b) responds to the technical informational needs of those who are--or expect to be--vocationally committed to the agricultural sector, (c) is responsible for the general agricultural education (agricultural literacy)\* of individuals outside the agricultural sector; and (d) provides a transitional experience for many who live in rural areas but who have no vocational commitment to agriculture (National Academy of Sciences, 1971, p. 7).

As defined above, it is logical to assume agricultural education embraces both formal and non-formal processes, activities and programs associated with agriculture. Furthermore, it can be inferred agricultural education addresses education in and about agriculture as part of formal public education and also as part of non formal education.

#### As a Part of Formal Public Education

At present, agricultural education as a part of formal public education encompasses several educational programs as illustrated below by examples of existing instructional processes, activities and/or programs in use nationally:

-Elementary education **about\*** agriculture.  
The FFA promotional program "Food for America" is a prime example of this educational endeavor.

-Secondary education **about\*** agriculture.  
"Agriculture in the Classroom", sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is an excellent illustration of this type of program. "Agriculture in the Classroom" would also be appropriate to list under elementary education about agriculture.

-Secondary education **in\*** agriculture.  
The vocational agriculture program offered in the nation's secondary public schools depicts this instructional endeavor.

-Postsecondary education **in\*** agriculture.  
The Young Farmer and Adult Farmer programs offered as a part of the comprehensive high schools and the technical education programs in agriculture, including adult education, offered by two year technical institutes, and community colleges are excellent examples of postsecondary education programs in agriculture.

-Teacher education in agriculture.  
Teacher education programs in agriculture offered in state universities and land grant colleges are typical examples of these programs.

-State Department of Education.  
Personnel involved in state supervision and administration of vocational and technical education programs **in\*** agriculture are representative examples.

**Note:** \*As a point of reference, those educational programs (vocational agriculture, young farmer, adult farmer, technical education programs in agriculture, etc.) designed primarily to prepare and upgrade or update students for careers and occupations in agriculture, broadly defined are referred to as "educational programs **in** agriculture." Those programs which teach general education in agriculture, or "agricultural literacy", are referred to as "educational programs **about** agriculture."

#### As a Part of Non-Formal Education

The term "agricultural education" can be broadened further when non-formal educational programs are included. There are numerous educational programs which blend the applied sciences of agriculture with the applied behavioral sciences of education and which are delivered through non-formal educational settings. Non-formal education refers to "organized educational activities offered by non school organization, usually characterized by flexibility, relevancy to contemporary problems, and volunteer participation" (Peterson, 1979, p. 16).

The role of agricultural education in non-formal education involves several distinct programs and approaches. Illustrated below are **some** of the more widely recognized agricultural education programs delivered in a non formal education context:

-Cooperative Extension.

The major educational programs offered in Cooperative Extension involve 4-H club work, agricultural and natural resources, home economics, and rural leadership development.

-International Education.

International Agricultural Extension Education, International Agricultural Development, and U.S. Department of State-funded USAID projects are examples of agricultural education programs illustrating non formal education delivered through the component of international education.

-Private Business Training and Development Incentives.

Non formal agricultural education is also provided by the private sector. Commodity groups, trade associations, business and companies associated with the broad agricultural sector are some examples of private business offering this type of non formal agricultural education.

-Other Government Programs.

The Soil Conservation Service, the Farmers Home Administration, etc., are government agencies which have built into their programs non formal educational activities.

### Conclusions

There are several obvious conclusions which can be drawn from the above illustration which demonstrates the breadth and depth of educational programs occurring in agricultural education as a part of formal public education and also as a part of non formal education.

Vocational agriculture is **only one** specific program under the agricultural education umbrella.

The terms "vocational agriculture" and "agricultural education" are not synonymous.

The term "agricultural education" is much broader and more inclusive than the specific program termed "vocational agriculture".

Agricultural education as a part of formal public education embraces both educational programs **in** agriculture and educational programs **about** agriculture.

Agricultural education is much broader and more inclusive than just formal public education.

Non formal education programs associated with agriculture are a vital and viable dimension of agricultural education.

### Implications and Consequences

Based upon the conclusions drawn from the illustrations presented herein, several questions must be answered. The implications and consequences of merely substituting terminology must be thoroughly studied by the profession before action is taken.

Should federal (and state) presence for vocational education be maintained if the mission is broadened to include elementary and secondary education **about** agriculture?

Should "agricultural literacy" become a function of vocational education **in** agriculture?

Should the mission of vocational education in agriculture encompass all aspects of formal public education?

Should the "education **about** agriculture" portion of the curriculum be taught by the vocational agriculture teacher?

If not, who will or should teach the "education **about** agriculture" portion of the curriculum?

Will local boards of education be willing to fund programs "about agriculture" as part of the general education curriculum?

Should programs of "education **about** agriculture" be designed as a separate course, or as part of an existing course or courses in the general education curriculum?

Should FFA and SOE be incorporated into programs of "education **about** agriculture"? If yes, how?

Should "education **about** agriculture" be approached as a new and innovative instructional program, or become a part of the vocational agriculture program?

It is obvious there are no simple solutions. However, merely changing the term will not solve the issue. There are too many implications and consequences which would result if this simple approach was implemented.

### Summary

The primary intent of this article was to argue the point that the terms "vocational agriculture" and "agricultural education" are not synonymous. If one studies the definitions and illustrations presented herein, the answer is obvious. An attempt was made to illustrate that the term agricultural education is much broader and more inclusive than the specific program termed vocational agriculture. To many in the profession, this is probably a moot point. However, when one analyzes the implications and consequences resulting by merely changing the name, the

issue at hand becomes very serious and far reaching. As Warmbrod (1987) so succinctly stated, "Changing titles...., substituting words..are attractive temptations". This is certainly a time in which terminology used by the profession is confusing and could become very misleading.

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