AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED OKLAHOMA AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' PERCEPTION AND/OR PRACTICES RELATIVE TO CURRICULUM, COMMUNICATION AND ACTIVITIES

By

G. T. MOODY

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Oklahoma State University

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Thesis Adviser

Dean of the Graduate College

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 1990, modernization of the Oklahoma agricultural education curriculum became a reality when the teachers of agriculture (hereafter referred to as teachers) were presented with new and innovative curriculum materials (i. e. Natural Resources, Agricultural Products and Processing, etc.). The modernization of the curriculum was a result of several years of study conducted by professionals from all walks of life who resided within the state. This group of individuals were contributing members of the Oklahoma Agricultural Education/FFA and Agribusiness Task Force organized by Dr. Roy Peters Jr., Director of the Oklahoma Department of Vocational-Technical Education. In brief, the product of the efforts of this Task Force were new course offerings within the agricultural education programs of Oklahoma. Obviously, the courses were offered, in part, to meet the needs of students and employer alike.

Furthermore, Mr. Eddie Smith, State Supervisor of Agricultural Education, Oklahoma Department of Vocational-Technical Education, shared a common concern with the teachers pertaining to the frequency and extent they were participating/exhibiting at either fairs, shows, or contests. The concern was compassionately expressed by Mr. Smith to all of the teachers who attended the

Agricultural Education Summer Conference in Tulsa, 1989. Mr. Smith expressed, at that time, that he wished to bring about a change which would curtail the frequency and level of extent of exhibiting at livestock shows, particularly.

Naturally, an additional concern surfaced due to the rapid new and innovative program changes. That concern pertained to the effectiveness of communication between, within, and/or among all agricultural educators in the state including: teachers, state staff, and teacher educators. Of most importance, however, was the impression the teachers had relative to the effectiveness of the communication methods which were being utilized.

Concerning each of the aforementioned areas (curriculum, activities, and communication), there seemed to be a sufficient number of questions which were unanswered to warrant a study of this nature.

Statement of the Problem

Realizing that agricultural education programs certainly have commonality (by design) in Oklahoma, it is just as important to emphasize that each agricultural education program is unique to itself because it should strive to adapt to meet the needs of the immediate community. In other words, programs in differing geographical locations across the state will vary; therefore, it seemed appropriate (and essential) to analyze a particular geographical sector (the Northeast Agricultural Education Supervisory District) because of the commonalities of their

particular sector. Among all of the commonalities, a commonality pertaining to shared problems or concerns of the teachers, within this sector, needed to be addressed - especially in the area of curriculum, activities, and communication. Otherwise, the perceptions and/or practices of the teachers will remain virtually unknown.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to conduct an analysis of selected Oklahoma Agricultural Education Teacher's perceptions and/or practices related to curriculum, communication, and activities.

Objectives of the Study

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, the following objectives were established:

1. To determine the teachers' impression of the new curriculum and to determine for what reasons their impression was either favorable or unfavorable;

2. To determine the types of assistance (pertaining to the new curriculum) the teachers believed would be of most value to them;

3. To determine the level of difficulty in maximizing instructional time by the teachers within each class period each day (and for what reasons) and to determine some realistic approaches which would enable them to maximize their instructional time;

4. To determine how current (or up-to-date) the core curriculum materials are which the teachers are currently using;

5. To determine the level of effectiveness of existing communication methods and to obtain suggestions for improvement;

6. To determine whether or not the teachers attended selected intra-curricular activities and to have them rank, in order of importance, those selected intra-curricular activities;

7. To determine the number of livestock shows their community believes to be important that the teachers participate in each calendar year and to determine the number the teachers believe they should participate in;

8. To determine the level of benefit the state staff, teacher educators, and administrators are to the mission, goals, and objectives of agricultural education in Oklahoma as perceived by the teachers and how they might be of more benefit; and,

9. To determine the one major constraint which prohibits the teachers from having their ideal local program as they perceive it.

Assumptions of the Study

1. Although the validity of the questionnaire was established, it remains assuming that the questions asked did in fact elicit the data sought; and,

2. The teachers understood the questions asked and provided their honest and sincere perceptions.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study included all of the Agricultural Education teachers (99) who were contracted to teach during the academic year of 1990-1991 within the Northeast Supervisory District of Oklahoma.

Definitions

The following definitions are as they apply to this study.

Agricultural Education (AGED) - The secondary study of agricultural related fields which includes classroom instruction, supervised agricultural experiences and FFA involvement.

Circular Letter - Monthly correspondence by mail between the state vo-tech supervisory staff and all Oklahoma AGED teachers. The letter contains information about upcoming events, concerns and news along with instructional information and directives.

Communication - The sharing of information between two or more parties.

Data Transmission Network (DTN) - A regularly updated marketing, weather, news and communication network available to all AGED departments in Oklahoma.

Future Farmers of America (FFA) - The student organization associated with Agricultural Education to provide hands-on experience, out-of-class activities and competition to enhance their classroom studies.

In-Service - Opportunities provided for Agricultural professionals to enhance their technical or teaching skills.

Intra-curricular Activities - Out-of-class educational activities associated with the FFA. Examples include the National FFA Convention, Sophomore Motivation Conference, Chapter Officer Leadership Training Conference, FFA Made for Excellence, FFA Alumni Camp, Washington Conference Program, Oklahoma Junior Livestock show, American Royal Livestock show, and the National Western Livestock show.

Instructional Time - Time spent covering instructional material contained in a unit of instruction within a normal class period.

Oklahoma Vocational Agricultural Teachers Association (OVATA) Board of Directors - An eight member elected board which governs the OVATA and communicates with other organizations and authority figures.

Outlook - The Oklahoma FFA's bi-monthly news publication which primarily presents feature stories and articles about FFA members, advisors, events and activities.

Professional Improvement (PI) Meetings - Meetings held monthly for in-service to AGED instructors in the same geographical area.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to present a review of literature which the author deemed relevant to the study. This review of literature is divided into the following sections: (1) Curriculum; (2) Communication; (3) Activities; and, (4) Summary.

Curriculum

The role that curriculum plays in the total picture of agricultural education is the foundation. All the aspects of agricultural education are related to the information being taught during instructional time in class. Therefore the development and selection of curriculum is very important. Finch (1979) set the stage for the discussion of curriculum development in Vocational Education:

> Ever since the term 'curriculum' was added to educators' vocabularies, it has seemed to convey many things to many people. To some, curriculum has denoted a specific course, while to others it has encompassed the entire educational environment. While perceptions of this term may vary, the fact must be recognized that the curriculum extends beyond a simple definition. Curriculum constitutes a key element in the educational process that is extremely broad in scope and touches virtually everyone who is involved with teaching and learning (p. 10).

According to Hauenstein (1972, p. 10)

> The curriculum provides the organized educational process through which the individual gains knowledge and the more efficient and effective the generation, organization, and transmission of knowledge, the greater will be the potential for learning.

Unruh (1975) identified curriculum development as a complex process of assessing needs, identifying desired learning outcomes, planning and preparing for instruction to achieve the outcomes, and using the cultural, social and personal needs and interests that the curriculum is to serve. Perritt's (1986) opinion was that

> maintaining skills that are concurrent with today's technologies is not a new problem for vocational agriculture teachers but rather an old problem that has created a new challenge for today's professional teacher (p. 4).

Oklahoma started developing their own curriculum in 1968 in order to provide teachers with a more uniform, consistent curriculum. Harp (1986, p. 10) stated:

> The 1968 Oklahoma State Plan for Vocational Education (1969) stressed the need for curriculum development in all divisions of vocational and technical education. The plan proposed the development of a Basic Core Curriculum Guide for Oklahoma vocational agriculture which would include lesson plans and information sheets.

A research study related to Vo-Tech's Curriculum and Instructional Materials Center agriculture materials was conducted by Smith (1977). His study compared attitudes of student teachers toward the Vocational Agriculture Basic Core Curriculum before and after student teaching. The conclusions from Smith's research important to this study were: (1) student teachers felt that secondary students needed more involvement in class activities by the use of

assignment sheets, (2) aids should be supplied to supplement the materials. Smith's (1977) research further revealed that the greatest decline in student teachers' attitudes of the usefulness of components was associated with terminal objectives and suggested activities.

Briers (1979, p. 42) reported the following results:

> Experiments evaluating instructional materials in vocational education have yielded varying results. Some studies (Shontz, 1963; Barker, 1967; Wilson, 1971) showed that the use of new instructional materials was more successful than 'control' materials in increasing student knowledge of subject matter. On the other hand, several evaluative studies (Ehresman, 1966; Ahrens, 1970; Gliem, 1976; Gessey, 1976) did not reveal differences in student achievement between experimental (new materials) and control groups. Collectively, the studies suggested that carefully designed experiments, properly developed instructional materials, and inservice education can result in detectable differences in student achievement.

Whetzel (1989) expressed the role curriculum plays and characteristics of properly developed materials:

> Curriculum plays a major role in soliciting students into the agricultural program. The agricultural teacher is charged with developing a curriculum that is highly motivating and teaches the skills necessary to make students employable in business and industry. Coordinating the curriculum with a local entrepreneur is extremely important and can easily be accomplished. The development of a highly technical curriculum must integrate theories of thought. The first thought is that of making students employable in business and industry, as well as outside of the local community, and the second thought of assisting in the academic preparation of those students wanting and needing additional education beyond the secondary level (p. 18).

Because of these principles, curriculum is in a constant change to stay updated and current. Just as Harp (1986) stated that major curriculum changes took place in 1968 and 1984, similar

changes are taking place in the early 1990's. The need for curriculum change is stated by Pierce (1989, p. 9):

> Agriculture Education programs in Oklahoma are being redirected to meet the needs of the future. Developing quality instructional materials is the quickest way to improve programs for the future.

A specific plan was made to fulfill the objectives of the redirection of Oklahoma Agricultural Education Curriculum.

Modernizing Agricultural Education (1990, p. 4) expressed:

> It is strongly held that vocational agriculture must broaden its perspective and be willing to provide students with the skills needed to enter and advance in the new fields of agriculture. Several worthwhile recommendations have been offered to modernize vocational agriculture. Develop and teach a modern curriculum. Broaden the relevance and scope of the curriculum, supervised agriculture experiences, and the FFA.

According to the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Tehnical Education's Career Planner (1990, pp. 3-4):

> The broad objectives for students enrolled in Agricultural Education are to develop:
>
> 1. An understanding of and appreciation for career opportunities and preparation needed to enter and progress in agricultural occupations.
> 2. Agricultural competencies needed to engage in and advance in agricultural occupations, including continuing education.
> 3. Business, management, marketing, and entrepreneurial skills needed in agricultural occupations.
> 4. Those abilities in human relations that are essential in agricultural occupations.
> 5. Career objectives and job-seeking/job-retention skills.
> 6. The abilities needed to demonstrate and follow effective leadership in fulfilling occupational, social, and civic responsibilities.

7. Practical life skills needed for planning, establishing, and maintaining a homestead and garden.

The Career Planner (1990, p. 5) went on to state:

> The total scope and sequence of Agricultural Education includes varied program offerings for students in grades 8 through 12. Students may enter at the eighth grade and progress through one of several program sequences to achieve their career objective within agricultural education programs. The agricultural sequence may begin at the eighth or ninth grades with a prerequisite of Ag I for all other courses.

Several Curriculum areas were considered when the redirection objectives were made. Coffey (1984, p. 6) stated:

> Agriculture mechanics, sales and service, horticulture, forestry, production agriculture, natural resources . . . whatever the area of study implies, occupational experiences in agriculture education are continuously being examined. And vocational agriculture change to meet the needs of contemporary America? If vocational agriculture is to meet its mission of training or retraining students for job entry levels in agriculture occupations, increased emphasis must be placed on alternatives to traditional production agriculture programs. Population movement has caused an almost overnight blossoming of suburbs, exurbs, and trailer parks on land that was recently in agriculture production. Vocational agriculture teachers commonly express concern for the role and future of the non-farm student in their program.

Cheatham (1986) felt that the need to stay current was very crucial. One direction that should be taken is in the area of Natural Resources:

> Staying current! As a teacher, how important is it to stay current in our chosen profession? Can we afford to stand in front of a classroom full of students or serve as an administrator and not be on the cutting edge of knowledge and technology? Obviously, the answer is "shame on us" for thinking of such a preposterous idea. While all of us have wrestled with ideas and ways of staying current in our field of study, few of us have given serious

> thought about the consequences which occur when we fall short of our goal (p. 11).

In reference to Natural Resources Cheatham (1986, p. 12) went on to say:

> Many of us fail to realize the importance of natural resources and the impact this area has on our lives. Our very existence is dependent upon an adequate understanding and wise use of our natural resources. When we refer 'natural resources,' we include such areas as the air we breathe, the environment in which we live, the water we drink, the soil that grows our food, the forests that provide timber for our home, oil and gas that furnish our energy, our vast rangeland, wetlands and wildlife. Vocational agriculture teachers and administrators who work with natural resources programs face difficult but exciting challenges in providing students with knowledge, problem-solving, and thinking skills that will allow them to deal with the complex problems relating to the natural resources areas of the future. As professional educators, the thought of carrying out this important assignment without being at the cutting edge of new knowledge and technology in the natural resources area is simply unthinkable.

Agricultural Sales and Service was one of the areas that new curriculum was developed in according to the redirection objectives. Aery (1984) felt that this one area addressed rural needs:

> I feel safe in stating that between 20-25 percent of the work force in the United Stated are employed in some field of agriculture. However, only 3-4 percent of those persons are actually farmers and all indications point to that percent decreasing in the future. This shift from production agriculture to other types of agricultural career opportunities should be reflected in the training our students receive. One method of accomplishing this would be the development of sound sales and service programs in our curriculum. Granted, the basic principles and knowledge of production agriculture cannot be totally neglected. The first two years of the program should provide the production training, followed by two years of concentrated study in the diverse fields of agribusiness. There are numerous high schools that have utilized the agribusiness option for several years. However, I believe that there are many other schools across the nation that would greatly benefit by the

> addition of this option to their existing programs (pp. 5-6).

After new curriculum has been developed the necessary task of inservicing teachers is mandatory for proficient use at the local level. Godfrey (1986) addressed that issue by stating:

> Inservice education is essential for teachers to keep current in the face of changing technology. Teacher educators and state supervisors play a vital role in determining teacher needs and arranging classes and workshops. University and Extension specialists from technical departments along with industry representatives will need to be involved with inservice programs. Ways to teach new technologies are also critical topics for inservice programs. The rapid advancements in science and technology dictate that the vocational agriculture teacher be prepared and equipped to teach current and advanced technology. Teachers must take additional training to keep themselves abreast of new developments to be able to pass knowledge on the students of all ages (p. 10).

Activities

Most out-of-class activities associated with high school Agricultural Education are participated in as FFA activities. FFA is the vocational student organization related to Agricultural Education with a nationwide membership of close to 500,000 and a Oklahoma membership of approximately 20,000 (Boggs, 1991). "Organized in November 1928, the FFA is an integral part of the curriculum of vocational agriculture/agribusiness departments in the public schools" (FFA Manual, 1988, p. 8).

The FFA's constitution presented a more detailed explanation of the organization's purpose:

> To build the confidence of students in themselves and their work by developing desirable work habits and effective use of their time by learning to assume

> responsibilities and by developing personal and occupational competencies in communications, human relations, and social abilities leading to intelligent choices of careers, and successful employment, including entrepreneurship in agriculture. To foster programs and activities which will develop occupational pride and responsibility, leadership, character, scholarship, citizenship, patriotism, thrift, and the improvement in community life by encouraging members to improve the home and its surroundings and to develop and improve the community, including its economic, environmental and human resources (FFA Manual, 1988, p. 56).

The FFA's achievement of these purposes was noticed by the Committee of Agricultural Education in Secondary schools and the Board of Agriculture for the National Research Council. In their report "Understanding Agriculture: New Directions for Education," the committee made the following reference to the FFA program:

> As an organization for high school students enrolled in vocational agriculture, the FFA has a record of accomplishment and the capacity to foster individual improvement. For many students, the FFA achieves its goal of developing entrepreneurial skills, leadership, and citizenship (National Research Council, 1988, p. 43).

While adults and nonmembers are watching the organization from the outside, FFA members monitor it from within. These young people stated what they expected from each FFA member as they perform the FFA's opening ceremonies during each meeting conference, or convention: "To practice brotherhood, honor rural opportunities and responsibilities, and develop those qualities of leadership which a Future Farmer should possess" (FFA Manual, 1988, p. 28).

The FFA is an integral part of the Agricultural Education similar to the relationship among other vocational students organizations and their vocational areas.

> Vocational youth organizations are an integral component of the students' vocational preparation in that they provide an emphasis in career planning, civic awareness, social competence, leadership ability, and most importantly, occupational preparation (Spooner, 1974, p. 2).

In addition to being part of the agricultural education, Rosenfield (1983) believed the FFA has made great contributions in leader training:

> Perhaps the most outstanding contribution of vocational agriculture is the leadership training it provides through an allied student organization, the Future Farmers of America [FFA] (p. 273).

Based on these and additional conclusions, Braker's (1973) recommendations included "members should become more involved in chapter activities and an attempt should be made to get every member actively involved and interested" (p. 135).

Koeninger (1988) also had a positive perception of all vocational student organizations (VSOs):

> When vocational students step from the classroom to such a volatile work environment, that must be armed with far more than occupation-specific skills. They must have the skills needed to adapt to change, to enlist cooperation, to be flexible, and to take on new assignments . . . Career advancement opportunities will be greatest for those who have developed, practiced, and refined leadership skills as part of their occupational preparation . . . VSOs work !
>
> Students who participate in VSO leadership activities are more likely to possess desirable employee traits: adaptability, alertness, assertiveness, dependability, enterprise, enthusiasm, independence, objectivity, originality, personal integrity, persistence, resourcefulness, self-confidence, tact, and tolerance of stress (pp. 38-39).

Bell (1985) expressed a similar opinion of FFA activities,

particularly contests:

> When administered correctly, contest participation will assist students in gaining self-confidence, enhance their self-image and build their self-esteem. Maslow, in his hierarchy of needs, identifies the development of self-esteem as a necessary step toward self-actualization. It can than be said that contest participation assists students in their maturity process (pp. 5-6).

However, not all authors agreed on the benefits of FFA activities and contests. Jones (1983) feared that some teachers were getting caught up in too many activities:

> From the teachers' point of view, it is very easy to get caught in the myriad of available FFA activities so that educational purpose and value are lost to the chore of simply completing an event. And just as the FFA provides recognition for the member, it also serves as one of the few sources of acclaim for the teacher (p. 15).

But Jones (1983) conceded:

> Yet, what a wonderful teaching tool the FFA is when wisely used by the teacher. For motivation, participation, recognition, decision making, leadership training, and human relations skill development; no other youth organization can offer the opportunities of the FFA (p. 15).

In relation to FFA activities being an extension and "hands-on" experience of the instructional curriculum there appears to be a growing concern. According to Moss (1990), the "tail wagging the dog" syndrome is worthy of our attention.

> As a student, a teacher, and teacher educator, I have listened to numerous arguments about the role of the FFA in the instructional program. Invariably someone gets around to saying that for too long the FFA has been 'the tail wagging the dog.' Perhaps the focus on the FFA has been too great in certain instances. I've heard programs described as nothing more than 'contest teaching' and I grimace when a noted speaker, while addressing a gathering of agriculture teachers, reminisces about when he took FFA in high school from this FFA teacher. I'm still waiting to hear a speaker remark that they owe their success in

> agribusiness to the opportunities presented and preparation received from classroom instruction while studying vocational agriculture (p. 4).

The role of FFA activities in the curriculum according to Goolsby (1985, pp. 12-14) is:

> FFA contests are well utilized when the instructor uses them first of all as a testing tool, to see if learning has taken place. Prior to this testing, however, there should be a foundation of quality classroom instruction and laboratory experience which emphasizes what should be learned and why it should take place. If instructors use most of their class time to teach students how to win contests, they may accumulate some hardware and get their students to think them great, but such instructors have actually short changed the student's future.

Gartin (1985a, p. 4) added:

> We, as vocational agriculture instructors, need to utilize contests and conventions to help us motivate students to set goals for themselves and learn. At the same time, we need to keep vocational agriculture contests and FFA contests and conventions balanced with the other aspects of our programs.

Vocational agriculture contests are an outgrowth of classroom and laboratory instruction. These contests should be designed to test students' abilities, competencies, and skills that were taught in agriculture education classes. If the instruction is taken to the doing level and implemented in the student's supervised occupational experience program, preparing students for contests is simplified and ongoing year round.

This is not saying that contests dictate curriculum. The opposite should be true. Contests should be constructed and designed with curriculum in mind.

Osborne and Witt (1985) backed up the opinions of Gartin and

added a perspective of the Agricultural Education teacher:

> Participation in relevant contests should be considered a part of the job from the teacher's standpoint, simply because of the tremendous benefits that students receive. Teachers have always gone the extra mile to provide experiences for students that strengthen their skills and abilities. Participation in FFA contests should be a natural and essential outgrowth of the instructional program (p. 7).

The potential for FFA activities to aid instructional activities was expressed by Gartin (1985b).

> From the beginning, vocational agriculture has provided training and experience beyond the classroom. Vocational and affective domain skills are developed through the 'Learning By Doing' component of the FFA. This concept makes instruction more interesting and more practical by combining work experience and agricultural leadership development activities with classroom activities. The FFA is an important teaching tool for the practical application of lessons in leadership, cooperation, and citizenship. Through its activities, the FFA encourages entrepreneurship, helps develop better work attitudes and prepares better citizens for our society. Two influential activities which assist in developing agricultural leaders are contests and FFA conventions (p. 10).

Gartin (1985) went on to elaborate on the role of conventions and contests.

> Contests and conventions are motivating tools we can utilize to help produce the future leaders of agriculture. We must strive to make and keep them educational for our vocational agriculture students and FFA members. As agriculturists become more specialized and efficient, we too must constantly evaluate, update, and improve our contests and conventions for the betterment of our students (p. 11).

Communication

According to Websters Dictionary (1984), communication is "the sharing or exchanging of information, ideas, etc . . ." The role

communication plays in linking together all the aspects of agriculture, including curriculum and activities, is eminent. Loinberger (1982) expressed it this way:

> Communication is sometimes defined as the means by which ideas are transferred from one to a receiver. This implies that ideas or information is actually transferred from one person to another. But that really doesn't happen. In an inter-personal talk situation, all that is transferred are sound waves that travel from the mouth of the speaker to the ears of the listener. If communication is via the printed page, light impluses created by the page are transmitted (p. 109).

Loinberger (1982, p. 119) went on to add:

> There can be no diffusion of information or innovations without some kind of communication. But communication is only a necessity, not a sufficient, condition for diffusion. Sometimes when others don't respond as a speaker intended, people say, 'He just didn't communicate.' The assumption is that the recipient didn't respond because he didn't understand. They fail to recognize that understanding what the speaker says may be an equally good reason for not responding as the speaker intended. Also, the speaker may have failed to say what he meant.

Often times communication in the agriculture community is somewhat unique. The old adage "You got to know how to talk to farmers" is somewhat true. One of the barriers can be credibility of the source. Martin (1985) explained how credibility affects communication in agriculture.

> Of the qualities an information source may have, credibility is perhaps the most important. This is a usual requirement imposed for getting information and having advice accepted for almost anything: farming, nutrition, health, or religion. Source regarded as credible is attended to, sought, and used far more than one that is not; also, information from a credible source is much more likely to be accepted than information from a non-credible source (p. 19).

Communication is the means by which a teacher disperses information to his/her students. That dispersal of information can be accomplished by more than just verbal means. Gartin (1989, p. 4) explained:

> The positive use of nonverbal communication by the agriculture instructor in the classroom, with the student, parent, and employer in the supervised agricultural experience program, and in FFA activities, might solve many of the problems agricultural education is facing today. The decrease in the quality of supervised agricultural experience programs and enrollment in the FFA could possibly be reserved if more teachers communicated nonverbally the value and importance of SAEP and FFA to students. The use of nonverbal communication could contribute to our student's development of agricultural leadership, cooperation, and citizenship. the awareness of nonverbal communication on the part of the students and teachers could increase their competence and make them more gainfully employable.

Before the teacher can have the information ready to send to the students, this information may have already changed hands several times considering curriculum developers, state staff, teacher trainer institutions, administrators, parents, et cetera. In a direct link above the teacher is the school administration. Martin (1985) reported this about communication between Ag teachers and administrators:

> How can school administrators know what vocational agriculture programs are doing? No one can be enlightened without full access to the facts. School administrators must know what the vocational agriculture program is trying to accomplish, how it is going about achieving its objectives, how well it is succeeding and the problems it is encountering. This information should be written and shared with school administrators and advisory committee members. Merely dispersing this information will not ensure understanding or acceptance, but it is a beginning of the development of a systematic strategy of communication. Teachers and school administrators in Indiana should give consideration

> to the results of this study. Educators in other states may want to consider the implications of this study. With these comments in mind and using the results of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:
>
> 1. Vocational agriculture teachers and school administrators should develop a systematic approach to communication.
>
> 2. Vocational agriculture teachers and school administrators should make communication a vital part of every instructional management decision, identify problems, possible alternatives and suggestions and submit written reports regarding the program (pp. 19-25).

Considering communication between teachers and principals, Foster (1984) stated:

> In order to develop a high quality vocational agriculture program, these two individuals must not only communicate with one another what they think are the most important and highest quality activities in which the vocational agriculture teacher should participate, but should also be in relative agreement (p. 19).

The methods by which information is exchanged and shared is probably experiencing as much technological growth as any area. The induction of computers, networks, facsimile, reproduction, et cetera has changed the face of communication. According to a personal interview with Boggs (1991), this technology is affecting Agricultural Education as well. "Over fifty programs in Oklahoma have received data transmission network equipment to receive market reports, weather information, up-to-date agricultural news and communication with the state office".

Summary

The core of all formal education lies within the curriculum; that information which is supplied to the students. The mission of

providing appropriate, uniform curriculum has always been at the forefront of education. However in Agricultural Education that information core is in a constant state of change with the advancement of agriculture through technology. The curriculum base is much different today than during the early 1900's when secondary Vocational Agriculture was established by the Smith-Hughes Act. We are even seeing major changes in curriculum implemented in 1985.

As curriculum changes it affects the activities and events that are complimentary. Since the inception of Vocational Agriculture FFA, activities have played a major role. The impact that the FFA has had on the many students that have been involved has proven to be extremely valuable.

As curriculum and activities evolve, the task of sharing the changes becomes very important. Many professionals in Agricultural Education carry the burden of communication between Agriculture Educators.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the methods used and the procedures followed in conducting this study. In order to collect data which would provide information relating to the purposes and objectives of this study, the population was determined and the instrument was developed for data collection. A procedure was established and methods of data analysis were selected. Information was collected during the week of February 4 through 8, 1991 at Professional Improvement (PI) meetings attended by Agricultural Education teachers (hereafter referred to as teachers).

The Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Federal regulations and Oklahoma State University policy require review and approval of all research studies that involve human subjects before investigators can begin their research. The Oklahoma State University Office of University Research Services and the IRB conduct this review to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects involved in biomedical and behavioral research. In compliance with the aforementioned policy,

this study received the proper surveillance and was granted permission to continue.

Population of the Study

The population used in this study was composed of all teachers (99) currently under contract for the school year 1990-1991 to teach in the Northwest Supervisory District in Oklahoma. To be included in the study, voluntary consent was deemed appropriate and made available to the teachers; therefore, they utilized their discretion as to whether or not to respond to the questionnaire. To further assure anonymity the questionnaires were not coded and a follow-up survey, therefore, was not conducted. Reported in Table I is the distribution of respondents to the questionnaire. Of the 99 teachers comprising the population, nine (9.1 percent) of the teachers were not in attendance at the PI meeting, seven (7.1 percent) of the teachers chose not to participate in the study and therefore did not respond to the questionnaire which was administered; however, 83 (83.3 percent) responded to the questionnaire.

Design of the Instrument

Once the purpose and objectives of the study were established the next logical step was to determine the most effective means for gathering the necessary data. Consideration was given to various methods of obtaining data; however, it was determined that the most advantageous method would be the utilization of a survey instrument

TABLE I

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

Number of Respondents	Frequency N	Frequency %
Respondents	83	83.8
Nonrespondents	7	7.1
Non-attendance by Teachers	9	9.1
Total	99	100.0

(questionnaire) which could be administered in person to the teachers in attendance at the PI meetings. The rationale for this method was that the teachers would be a captive audience, little of their time would be required, and a higher percentage of response would be more likely as compared to a mailed questionnaire, for example.

Once the method of acquiring data was determined, the next step was to develop questions in order to accomplish the objectives of the study. Initially questions were brainstormed from which a list of questions were made. Upon review of the list, clarity, continuity, and appropriateness were taken into consideration after which revisions were made accordingly. The revisions evolved into a more formalized questionnaire. That product was then reviewed by

the researcher's major advisor and members of the state staff, Oklahoma Department of Vocational-Technical Education. Based upon the input of the aforementioned further revisions were made. The revised instrument was further validated by additional reviews and revisions.

The completed questionnaire consisted of forced choice response questions, questions including rating scales, and questions which included forced choice rankings. Each of the questions was categorized into one of three categories: (1) curriculum; (2) communication; and (3) activities. The questionnaire is presented in its entirety in Appendix A.

Conduct of the Study

The researcher traveled to the Northeast Supervisory District PI meetings and personally administered the questionnaires. More specifically on February 4 the researcher traveled to Muskogee and administered the survey to the Muskogee PI group; on February 5 to Bristow to the Tulsa PI group; on February 6 to Oolagah to the Vinita PI group; and, to Wilson on February 7 to the Morris PI group.

No attempt was made to survey the teachers who were not in attendance at the aforementioned PI meetings. This was by design. It is especially important to emphasize that complete anonymity be maintained; therefore, in the interest of those teachers they were not contacted pertaining to this study. Furthermore, those who were in attendance and chose not to respond, did so at their discretion.

Analysis of Data

The survey involved perceptions, practices, and subjective judgments which resulted in qualitative data. The survey was also designed to quantify the responses given, which allowed the use of statistical procedures to aid in the interpretation of the data.

To determine the teacher perceptions of the new curriculum, for example, they were asked to indicate the level at which they favored the new curriculum. Pertaining to this quantitative question, numbers were assigned and real limits of the numerical responses were established. In other words, the teachers could check "very favorable" which was assigned a numerical value of four or "favorable" which had a numerical value of three or "undecided" which had a numerical value of two or "not favorable" which had a numerical value of one. In order to determine the teachers' overall impression, a mean response was calculated. To better interpret the mean response the real limits were established as follows: "very favorable" equals 3.5 to 4.0; "favorable" equals 2.5 - 3.49; "undecided" equals 1.5 to 2.49; and, "not favorable" equals 1.0 to 1.49. Similar questions with similar responses which dealt with the teachers' perception of levels of difficulty and levels of effectiveness were analyzed in the same manner. Other quantitative questions were asked which included forced choice responses whereby frequency distributions were utilized in the analysis.

Finally, other questions were asked which elicited responses for the teachers which were qualitative in nature. For example, one

question which was asked was, "As an Agricultural Education teacher what is the 'one major constraint' which prohibits you from having 'your' ideal local program?"

Information collected from the survey instrument was tabulated and analyzed. A record was kept of the qualitative information collected from the survey instrument. The qualitative information was tallied by the researcher and the frequency distribution (numbers and percentages) was reported accordingly.

According to Bartz (1976), descriptive statistics refers to the meaningful values which describe the result of a particular behavior. Key (1974) further added:

> The primary use of descriptive statistics is to describe information or data through the use of numbers. The characteristics of groups of numbers representing information or data are called descriptive statistics (Section 51, p. 3).

As a further explanation of descriptive statistics, Bartz (1976, p. 22) stated, "Basically the frequency distribution is simply a table constructed to show how many times a given score or group of scores occurred."

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this chapter is to report the results from the questionnaire used to conduct this study. The purpose of this study was to conduct an analysis of selected Oklahoma Agricultural Education teachers' (hereafter referred to as teacher) perceptions and/or practices related to curriculum, communication, and activities.

The scope of this study included all of the Agricultural Education teachers (99) who were contracted to teach during the academic year of 1990-1991 within the Northeast Supervisory District of Oklahoma. Of the 99, 83 responded.

Reported in Table II is the frequency distribution and mean response of the teacher's impression of the new curriculum. Of the 81 teachers surveyed, nine (13.3 percent) of the teachers indicated they perceived the new curriculum to be "very favorable". Thirty-nine (47.0 percent) of the teachers indicated the new curriculum was "favorable"; however, five (6.0 percent) of the teachers considered the new curriculum to be "not favorable". Another 28 (33.7 percent) of the teachers remained "undecided" relative to whether or not they favored the new curriculum. The mean response was determined to be 2.64 when interpreted indicating that the teachers believed the new curriculum to be "favorable".

TABLE II

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION AND MEAN RESPONSE OF THE TEACHERS' IMPRESSION OF THE NEW CURRICULUM

Impression	Frequency Distribution N*	%
(4) Very Favorable	9	13.3
(3) Favorable	39	47.0
(2) Undecided	28	33.7
(1) Not Favorable	5	6.0
Total	81	100.0

*N varies because not all teachers responded to all questions

$\bar{X}$ = 2.64 (favorable)

The teachers were asked an open-ended question, "For what reason(s) is your impression favorable (or unfavorable) regarding new curriculum?" In fairness to all teachers who chose to respond to this question, it was deemed essential to report all of their responses. Responses which were similar were grouped. The number of teacher respondents' impressions to the new curriculum is presented in Table III.

Reported in Table IV is the frequency distribution of the teachers' impression of the value of types of assistance. Of the 67 teachers surveyed, 32 (47.8 percent) indicated that they perceived special In-service offered at the PI level to be the most valuable. In the opinion of nine (13.4 percent) a state teacher staff specialist was most valuable while 11 (16.4 percent) felt that assistance from other AGED teachers was of most value. Formal instruction (graduate level courses) received only one (1.5 percent) response relative to the value of this type of assistance and Business and Industry representatives received eight (11.9 percent). Six (9 percent) of the teachers responded that an "other" type of assistance was most valuable.

Table V reported the frequency distribution and mean response of the teacher's perceived level of difficulty maximizing instructional time. Nine (13.4 percent) indicated full-time state instructional time. Of the 82 teachers surveyed, 12 (14.6 percent) indicated their perception of the level of difficulty in maximizing instructional time to be "very difficult." Twenty-four (29.3 percent) of the teachers indicated that it was difficult to maximize

TABLE III

TEACHERS' IMPRESSIONS REGARDING NEW CURRICULUM

Comment	Number of Respondents
Favorable	
Up-to-date with ag technology	6
New, fresh subject areas	9
Well written	5
Will reach more students	4
Unfavorable	
Curriculum needs improvement	8
Needs more reference material and instructional aids	2
Too general and elementary	2
Not up-to-date	1
Not enough material	2
Needs incorporation into present courses	1
Doesn't fit urban programs	1

TABLE IV

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION PERTAINING TO WHAT TYPE OF ASSISTANCE THE TEACHERS PERCEIVED WOULD BE OF MOST VALUE

Type of Assistance	Frequency Distribution N*	%
Special In-Service offered at the PI Level	32	47.8
Full-time State Staff (Specialist)	9	13.4
Assistance provided by other AGED Teachers	11	16.4
Formal Instruction (graduate level course)	1	1.5
Business and/or Industry Representatives, etc.	8	11.9
Others	6	9.0
Total	67	100.0

TABLE V

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION AND MEAN RESPONSE OF THE TEACHERS' PERCEIVED LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY MAXIMIZING INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

Level of Difficulty	Frequency Distribution N*	%
(4) Very Difficult	12	14.6
(3) Difficult	24	29.3
(2) Slightly Difficult	40	48.8
(1) Not Difficult	6	7.3
Total	82	100.0

$\bar{X}$ = 2.51 (difficult)

instructional time while 40 (48.8 percent) of the teachers indicated it was only slightly difficult. However, six teachers indicated it was "not difficult" to maximize instructional time as they perceived it. The mean response was determined to be 2.51 when interpreted indicating that teachers believe it is difficult to maximize class time.

The teachers were asked an open-ended question, "For what reason is it difficult for you to maximize the amount of time you spend teaching during each class period?" In fairness to all teachers who chose to respond to this question, it was deemed essential to report all of their responses. Responses which were similar were grouped (Table VI).

Reported in Table VII is the frequency distribution of realistic approaches to maximizing instructional time as perceived by the teachers. Of the 83 teachers, 31 (37.3 percent) stated that implementing time management practices would be a realistic approach to them maximizing their instructional time. Thirty (36.1 percent) of the teachers indicated that they perceived having a secretary to monitor phone calls and four (4.8 percent) of the teachers indicated that more activities on weekends would be a realistic approach to maximizing instructional time. Decreasing the number of FFA activities in which chapter participates was a realistic approach to maximizing instructional time as perceived by 13 (15.7 percent) of the teachers. In addition, nine (10.8 percent) of the teachers responded that more extensive use of the core curriculum would be a realistic approach to maximizing instructional time and ten (12

TABLE VI

TEACHER'S IMPRESSIONS OF TIME SPENT
TEACHING DURING CLASS PERIODS

Response	Number of Respondents
Difficult	
Too many visitors	6
Too many events and responsibilities	5
School responsibilities (building projects, etc.)	5
Other school activities	5
Various interruptions	4
Phone calls	4
Coordinating FFA activities	3
No preparation time	2
Shorter class periods	2
Paperwork and Reports	2
Taking up money	2
Unfamiliarity with new curriculum	1
Poor organization	1
Not Difficult	
Good lesson plans	3
Curriculum is well organized	1
Make instructional time a priority	1

TABLE VII

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF REALISTIC APPROACHES TO MAXIMIZING INSTRUCTIONAL TIME AS PERCEIVED BY THE TEACHERS

Realistic Approaches	Frequency Distribution N*	%
Implementing Time Management Practices	31	37.3
Have a Secretary Monitor Phone Calls	30	36.1
More FFA Activities on Weekends	4	4.8
Decrease the Number of FFA Activities in Which Your Chapter Participates	13	15.7
Utilizing the Core Curriculum More Extensively	9	10.8
Others	10	12.0

N = 83 (100%)

percent) of the teachers gave other responses.

Reported in Table VIII is the frequency distribution of how current the core curriculum materials are as perceived by the teachers. Forty-two (53.8 percent) of the 78 teachers responded that they perceived the core curriculum to be very current (1988 or newer) while 29 (37.2 percent) indicated that it was just current (1985 or newer). However, six teachers perceived the core curriculum not to be current (1984 or older) and one (1.3 percent) teacher did not use it.

Table IX reported the frequency distribution and mean responses regarding the level of effectiveness of communication between AGED professionals as perceived by the teachers. Regarding communication by circular letter, 82 teachers responded. Of the 82 teachers, one (1.2 percent) perceived the level of effectiveness of communication by circular letter to be "very effective", ten (12.2 percent) perceived the level to be "effective", 41 (50 percent) perceived the level to be "somewhat effective" and 30 (36.6 percent) perceived it to be not so effective. The mean response was 1.78 when interpreted indicating that the teachers believed the level of effectiveness of the circular letter as a method of communication to be "somewhat effective."

Eighty-two teachers responded on the level of effectiveness of Outlook as a method of communication between AGED professionals. Of those 82 teachers, two (2.4 percent) perceived Outlook to be "very effective", 11 (13.4 percent) perceived it to be "effective", 42 (51.3 percent) of the teachers' perception was "somewhat

TABLE VIII

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF HOW CURRENT THE CORE CURRICULUM MATERIALS ARE AS PERCEIVED BY THE TEACHERS

How Current	Frequency Distribution N*	%
Very Current (1988 or newer)	42	53.8
Current (1985 or newer)	29	37.2
Not Current (1984 or older)	6	7.7
Do Not Use the Core Curriculum	1	1.3
Total	78	100.0

TABLE IX

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION AND MEAN RESPONSE REGARDING LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGED PROFESSIONALS AS PERCEIVED BY THE TEACHERS

Communication Method	Frequency Distribution										Mean	Interpretation
	Very (4) Effective		(3) Effective		Somewhat (2) Effective		Not (1) Effective		Total			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Circular Letter	1	1.2	10	12.2	41	50.0	30	36.6	82	100.0	1.78	Somewhat Effective
Outlook	2	2.4	11	13.4	42	51.3	27	32.9	82	100.0	1.85	Somewhat Effective
PI Meetings			8	9.9	39	48.2	34	41.9	81	100.0	1.68	Somewhat Effective
DTN	10	16.2	19	30.6	19	30.6	14	22.6	62	100.0	2.40	Somewhat Effective
Correspondence through Administration	16	26.7	8	13.3	28	46.7	8	13.3	60	100.0	2.53	Effective
Other					6	66.7	3	33.3	9	100.0	1.33	Not Effective

effective" and 27 (32.9 percent) did not perceive it as being effective. The mean response was 1.85 when interpreted indicating that the teachers' perception of the level of effectiveness of Outlook as a method of communication between AGED professionals is "somewhat effective."

Eighty-one teachers responded to their perception of the level of effectiveness of PI meetings for communication between AGED professionals. None of the teachers perceived the level to be "very effective"; however, eight (9.9 percent) responded that PI meetings were an effective means of communicating and 39 (48.2 percent) responded that they were "somewhat effective." Relative to "no effectiveness", 34 (41.9 percent) responded.

Sixty-two teachers responded to the level of effectiveness of DTN as a communication method used by AGED professionals. Of the 62 responses, ten (16.2 percent) responded that they perceived that DTN was a "very effective" means of communicating between AGED professionals, 19 (30.6 percent) perceived it to be "somewhat effective", and 14 (22.6 percent) perceived the DTN to not be effective.

Sixty teachers responded to the level of effectiveness between AGED professions by correspondence through their administration as perceived by four respondents. Of the 62 teachers, 16 (26.7 percent) perceived the level of effectiveness to be "very effective", eight (13.3 percent) perceived it to be "effective", 28 (46.7 percent) perceived it to be "somewhat effective" and eight

(13.3 percent) perceived it not to be "effective."

Nine teachers responded to other methods of communication between AGED professionals other than what were listed as they perceived it. Six (66.7 percent) indicated that other methods were "somewhat effective" and three (33.3 percent) indicated that other methods were "not effective."

The teachers were asked an open-ended question, "Please indicate suggestions for improving the following: circular letters; Outlook; PI meetings; and other, please specify." In fairness to all teachers responding to this question, it was deemed essential to report all of the responses. Responses which were similar were grouped. The responses are presented in Table X.

Reported in Table XI is the frequency distribution and mean response of the teachers' perception of the "system" for addressing problems at competitive events. Of the 82 teachers responding, 14 (17.1 percent) perceived the level of effectiveness of the "system" of addressing problems at competitive events to be "very effective" and 32 (39.0 percent) perceived it to be "effective." Twenty-eight (34.1 percent) perceived the "system" to be "somewhat effective" and eight (9.8 percent) did not perceive the "system" for addressing problems at competitive events to be effective. The mean response was determined to be 2.63 when interpreted indicates that the teachers perceive the "system" used to address problems at competitive events to be effective.

Reported in Table XII is the frequency distribution of teachers' perceptions of who should be the authority for decisions

TABLE X

TEACHERS' SUGGESTIONS REGARDING THE IMPROVEMENT OF CIRCULAR LETTER, OUTLOOK, AND PI MEETINGS

Instrument	Number of Respondents
Circular Letter	
Good	2
Send out on regular monthly basis	2
Needs to be sent out more often	3
Use a new format	1
Put information into specific categories (i.e. Important information, coming events and "just for your information")	1
Only include important information	1
Outlook	
Good	4
Spread out coverage over entire state evenly	2
More urban news	1
Send out deadline reminders	1
More information on coming events	1
PI Meetings	
Good	2
More planning needs to be put into meetings	1
More educational in-service	8
Not as often	2
More often	1
Have idea sharing opportunities	1
Meetings need to be shorter	2
Fewer announcements and clutter	1
Other	
Don't send important information through superintendent	1

TABLE XI

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION AND MEAN RESPONSE OF EFFECTIVENESS OF "SYSTEM" FOR ADDRESSING PROBLEMS AT COMPETITIVE EVENTS AS PERCEIVED BY THE TEACHERS

Level of Effectiveness	Frequency Distribution N*	%
(4) Very Effective	14	17.1
(3) Effective	32	39.0
(2) Somewhat Effective	28	34.1
(1) Not Effective	8	9.8
Total	82	100.0

$\bar{X}$ = 2.63 (effective)

TABLE XII

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF WHO SHOULD BE THE AUTHORITY FOR DECISIONS WHEREBY REPRIMAND MAY BE NECESSARY

Primary Authority	Frequency Distribution N*	%
OVATA Board of Directors	20	28.6
Appropriate OVATA Committee	27	38.5
State Staff	15	21.4
Local Administration	6	8.6
Other	2	2.9
Total	70	100.0

whereby reprimand may be necessary. Of the 70 teachers responding, 20 (28.6 percent) perceived the OVATA Board of Directors, 27 (38.5 percent) perceived the appropriate OVATA committee, and 15 (21.4 percent) perceived the state staff to be the authority for decisions where reprimand may be necessary; however, six (8.6 percent) perceived that authority to be their local administration while two (2.9 percent) perceived it to be some other authority.

Reported in Table XIII is the frequency distribution of attendance and rank of importance of nine FFA activities. Out of 83 teachers, 47 (56.6 percent) responded that their FFA chapter attends the National FFA Convention and their chapter received a rank of importance of 3.33. Seventy-two teachers (86.7 percent) responded that they attended the Sophomore Motivational Conference and it ranked 2.90 in importance. When teachers responded to attendance of their chapter at Chapter Officer leadership conferences, 72 (86.7 percent) responded that they attend and it ranked 2.71. Attendance of Mode for Excellence received a rank of 4.77 and 29 (34.9 percent) of the teachers attended. Forty-two (50.6 percent) of the teachers responded that their chapter participated in Alumni Camp and it ranked 3.66. Indicating participation in the Washington Conference Program, 20 (24.1 percent) of the teachers responded and it ranked 5.78. In response to the Oklahoma Junior Livestock Show, 45 (54.2 percent) of the teachers attended and it ranked 5.69. Fifteen (18.1 percent) of the teachers indicated they exhibited at the American Royal and it ranked 7.33. Five (6.0 percent) of the teachers responded that they attended the National Western Livestock Show and

TABLE XIII

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THE TEACHERS PARTICIPATED IN SELECTED ACTIVITIES AND THE RANK OF IMPORTANCE OF THE ACTIVITIES

Intracurricular Activities Attended	Frequency Distribution						Mean of Ranks	Ranks
	Yes		No		Total			
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
National Convention	47	56.6	36	43.4	83	100.0	3.33	3
Sophomore Motivation Conference	72	86.7	11	13.3	83	100.0	2.90	2
Chapter Officer Leadership Training	72	86.7	11	3.3	83	100.0	2.71	1
Made for Excellence	29	34.9	54	65.1	83	100.0	4.77	5
Alumni Camp	42	50.6	41	49.4	83	100.0	3.66	4
Washington Conference Program	20	24.1	63	75.9	83	100.0	5.78	7
Oklahoma Junior Livestock Show	45	54.2	38	45.8	83	100.0	5.69	6
American Royal (Exhibition)	15	18.1	68	81.9	83	100.0	7.33	8
National Western Livestock Show	5	6.0	78	94.0	83	100.0	8.32	9

it received a rank of 8.32.

Reported in Table XIV is the frequency distribution of the number of livestock shows the teacher's community and the teacher believes to be important to participate in each year. Of the 80 teachers surveyed on their perception of their community's belief on the number of livestock shows it is important to attend each year, 12 (15.0 percent) responded that number to be from one to three, 37 (46.3 necessary to attend. Of the 81 teachers, 15 (18.5 percent) believed that number to be from one to three, 45 (55.6 percent) believed that number to be from four to six, 16 (19.8 percent) believed that number to be from seven to nine, three (3.7 percent) believed that number to be from ten to 12 and two (2.4 percent) believed that number to be 13 or higher.

Reported in Table XV is the frequency distribution of the teachers' perception pertaining to their attending more, fewer or about the same number of livestock shows. Of the 81 teachers surveyed, two (2.5 percent) perceived they would choose to attend more livestock shows, and 22 (27.2 percent) would attend fewer; however, 57 (70.3 percent) indicated that they would choose to attend about the same number of livestock shows each year.

Reported in Table XVI is the frequency and mean response of how beneficial selected groups are to the mission, goals and objectives of AGED as perceived by the teachers. Of the 81 teachers surveyed, 31 (37.8 percent) perceived the state vo-tech supervisory staff to be "very beneficial", 42 (51.2 percent) to be "beneficial", nine (11.0 percent) to be "somewhat beneficial" and none responded "not

TABLE XIV

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF THE NUMBER OF LIVESTOCK SHOWS THE TEACHER'S COMMUNITY AND THE TEACHERS BELIEVE TO BE IMPORTANT TO PARTICIPATE IN EACH YEAR

Number of Livestock Shows	Frequency Distribution			
	Community Beliefs		Teacher's Belief	
	N	%	N	%
One to Three	12	15.0	15	18.5
Four to Six	37	46.3	45	55.6
Seven to Nine	21	26.3	16	19.8
Ten to Twelve	4	5.0	3	3.7
Thirteen or More	6	7.4	2	2.4
Total	80	100.0	81	100.0

TABLE XV

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF THE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS PERTAINING TO THEIR ATTENDING MORE, FEWER, OR ABOUT THE SAME NUMBER OF LIVESTOCK SHOWS

Choices	Frequency Distribution	
	N	%
Attend More Livestock Shows	2	2.5
Attend Fewer Livestock Shows	22	27.2
Attend About the Same Number of Livestock Shows Each Year	57	70.3
Total	81	100.0

TABLE XVI

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION AND MEAN RESPONSE OF HOW BENEFICIAL SELECTED GROUPS ARE TO THE MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AS PERCEIVED BY THE TEACHERS

Selected Groups	Frequency Distribution										Mean	Interpretation
	Very (4) Beneficial		(3) Beneficial		Somewhat (2) Beneficial		Not (1) Beneficial		Total			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
State Vo-Tech Supervisory Staff	31	37.8	42	51.2	9	11.0			82	100.0	3.27	Beneficial
Teacher Trainer Institutions	16	19.5	46	56.1	19	23.2	1	1.2	82	100.0	2.94	Beneficial
Local School Administration	24	29.3	33	40.2	20	24.4	5	6.1	82	100.0	2.93	Beneficial

beneficial." The mean response was determined to be 3.27 when interpreted indicating that the teachers perceived the state vo-tech supervisory staff to be beneficial to the mission, goals and objectives of AGED. Sixteen (19.5 percent) teachers responded that they perceived the teacher trainer institutions to be very beneficial, 46 (56.1 percent) indicated "beneficial", 19 (23.2 percent) responded "somewhat beneficial" and one (1.2 percent) teacher responded "not beneficial." The mean response was determined to be 2.94 when interpreted which would indicate that the teachers perceived the teacher trainer institutions to be beneficial to the mission, goals and objectives of AGED. Twenty-four (29.3 percent) teachers responded that they perceived their local school administration to be "very beneficial", 33 (40.2 percent) responded "beneficial", 20 (24.4 percent) responded "somewhat beneficial" and five (6.1 percent) responded that their local school administration was "not beneficial". The mean response was determined to be 2.93 when interpreted indicating that the teachers perceived the local school administration to be beneficial to the mission, goals and objectives of AGED.

The teachers were asked an open-ended question, "In your opinion, what can each of the following groups do to be of more benefit to you in your program?" In fairness to all those teachers who chose to respond to this question, it was deemed essential to report all of the responses. Responses which were similar were grouped. The responses are presented in Table XVII.

TABLE XVII

TEACHER RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS REGARDING STATE VO-TECH SUPERVISORY STAFF, TEACHER TRAINER INSTITUTIONS, AND LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

Group	Number of Respondents
<u>State Vo-Tech Supervisory Staff</u>	
Listen and be more aware of community needs	8
Good job	3
More in-service	2
More local visits and fewer meetings	1
Hire older more stable supervisors	1
Increase funding	1
Be more supportive	1
Be more informative	1
	1
<u>Teacher Trainer Institutions</u>	
Good job	3
Better in-service	2
Show students a more realistic picture of AGED	3
Update curriculum being taught	2
Regional classes	1
More hands-on experiences	2
Better communication	2
<u>Local Administration</u>	
Be more familiar with AGED programs	6
Good job	3
Better awareness of available funding	3
Better communication	1
More open-minded	1

The teachers were asked an open-ended question, "As an Agricultural Education teacher, what is the 'one major constraint' which prohibits you from having 'your' ideal local program?" In fairness to all those teachers who chose to respond to this question, it was deemed essential to report all of the responses. Responses which were similar were grouped. The responses are presented in Table XVIII.

The teachers were asked an open-ended question, "Are there any other comments?" Responses included "Too much funding is going to area schools instead of comprehensive high school programs"; "We all need to try harder and complain less"; "There are too many expectations and family life is being sacrificed"; and "Don't limit the number of livestock shows or contests - will kill the program".

TABLE XVIII

TEACHER RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS REGARDING MAJOR CONSTRAINTS AFFECTING IDEAL LOCAL PROGRAMS

Comments	Number of Respondents
Inadequate funding	29
Not enough time	11
Lack of local administrative support	4
Too much athletics	3
Poor quality students	2
Lack of parental support	2
Public perceptions	1
Inadequate materials	2
Adult support groups	1
Lack of tradition	1

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

As Agricultural Education (AGED) moves into the 1990s, it is being seriously evaluated and looked at from the outside as well as within its own ranks. Because of major changes in education, efforts being made to "get back to the basics", and declining nationwide enrollments, leaders in Oklahoma agricultural education have encouraged modernization of curriculum, Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE) and FFA activities. Thus, new course offerings within AGED programs in Oklahoma were developed and implemented during the summer of 1990. The initiation of the new course work was designed to influence SAE's and FFA activities.

Since these major changes to modernize AGED in Oklahoma were implemented there seemed to be a sufficient number of questions which were unanswered to warrant a study of this nature.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to conduct an analysis of selected Oklahoma Agricultural Education Teacher's perceptions and/or practices related to curriculum, communication and activities.

Objectives of the Study

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, the following objectives were established:

1. To determine the teachers' impression of the new curriculum and to determine for what reasons their impression was either favorable or unfavorable.

2. To determine the types of assistance (pertaining to the new curriculum) the teachers believed would be of most value to them.

3. To determine the level of difficulty in maximizing instructional time by the teachers within each class period each day (and for what reasons) and to determine some realistic approaches which would enable them to maximize their instructional time.

4. To determine how current (or up-to-date) the core curriculum materials are which the teacher are currently using.

5. To determine the level of effectiveness of existing communication methods and to obtain suggestions for improvement.

6. To determine whether or not the teachers attended selected intracurricular activities and to have them rank, in order of importance, those selected intracurricular activities.

7. To determine the number of livestock shows their community believes to be important that the teachers participate in each calendar year and to determine the number the teacher believes they should participate in.

8. To determine the level of benefit the state staff, teacher educators, and administrators are to the mission, goals, and

objectives of agricultural education in Oklahoma as perceived by the teachers and how they might be of more benefit.

9. To determine the one major constraint which prohibits the teachers from having their ideal local program as they perceive it.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study included all of the Agricultural Education teachers (99) who were contracted to teach during the academic year of 1990-1991 within the Northeast Supervisory District of Oklahoma. Ninety teachers attended the meetings, however seven of those chose not to respond.

Major Findings

Reported in Table XIX is a summary of the findings in the area of curriculum. Regarding the teachers' impression of the new curriculum, 39 (47.0 percent) responded favorable and the mean response was 2.64 (favorable). Thirty-two (47.8 percent) responded that inservice at the PI level was the most valuable type of assistance to teachers. Responding to the difficulty of maximizing instructional time, 40 (48.8 percent) of the teachers responded it was slightly difficult. The respondents followed up by indicating approaches to maximizing their instructional time. The responses were 31 (37.3 percent) indicated implementing time management practices and 30 (36.1 percent) indicated a secretary to monitor phone calls. When asked how current the curriculum was, 42 (53.8 percent) indicated it was very current.

TABLE XIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS REGARDING CURRICULUM

Questions	Frequency Distribution of Responses (N = 83) N		%
Impression of New Curriculum?			
Very Favorable	9		13.3
Favorable	39		47.0
Undecided	28		33.7
Not Favorable	5		6.0
Total	81		100.0
$\bar{X}$ = 2.64 (favorable)			
Types of Assistance of Most Value to Teachers?			
Inservice at PI Level	32		47.8
Assisted by Other AGED Teachers	11		16.4
State Staff (specialists)	9		13.4
Others	15		22.4
Total	67		100.0
Difficulty Maximizing Instructional Time?			
Very Difficult	12		14.6
Difficult	24		29.3
Slightly Difficult	40		48.8
Not Difficult	6		7.3
Total	82		100.0
Approaches to Maximizing Instructional Time?			
Implement Time Management Practices	31	of N	37.3
Secretary Monitor Phone Calls	30	of N	36.1
Decrease Number of FFA Activities	13	of N	15.7
Total	--		-----
How Current is Core Curriculum?			
Very Current	42		53.8
Current	29		37.2
Not Current	6		7.7
Do Not Use Curriculum	1		1.3
Total	78		100.0

When asked why their impression was favorable, nine responded because it was a fresh, new subject area while eight responded that the curriculum needing improvement was the reason their impression was unfavorable. Six teachers responded that too many visitors was the reason it was difficult to maximize class time while five respondents blamed too many events/responsibilities or school responsibilities. However three teachers indicated it was not difficult to maximize class time if good lesson plans were prepared.

Reported in Table XX is a summary of the findings in the area of communication. Regarding the effectiveness of different communication methods the teachers responded that correspondence through their administration was effective as indicated by a mean response of 2.53. In response to the effectiveness of the "system" to resolve problems, 32 (39.0 percent) indicated it was effective and 28 (34.1 percent) indicated it was somewhat effective. The mean response was 2.63. The teachers then responded to who the authority should be. Twenty-seven (38 percent) felt like it should be the appropriate OVATA committee. The respondents were asked to offer suggestions regarding communication methods. Eight responded that PI meetings need to have more educational in-service and four felt that the Outlook was good, do not change it.

Reported in Table XXI is a summary of the findings regarding activities. In response to their chapter's attendance of selected activities, 72 (86.7 percent) indicated they attended the Sophomore Motivational Conference and Chapter Officer Leadership Training Conference and 47 (56.6 percent) attend the National FFA Convention.

TABLE XX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS REGARDING COMMUNICATION

Questions	Mean or Frequency Distribution of Responses (N = 83) N	%	Finding
Effectiveness of Communication Methods			
Circular Letter		1.78	Somewhat Effective
Outlook		1.85	Somewhat Effective
PI Meetings		1.68	Somewhat Effective
DTN		2.40	Somewhat Effective
Correspondence Through Administration		2.53	Effective
Other		1.33	Not Effective
Effectiveness of "System" to Resolve Problems			
Very Effective	14		17.1
Effective	32		39.0
Somewhat Effective	28		34.1
Not Effective	8		9.8
Total	82		100.0
$\bar{X}$ = 2.63 (Effective)			
Who Should Be the Authority			
OVATA Board of Directors	20		28.6
OVATA Committee	27		38.5
State Staff	15		21.4
Local Administration	6		8.6
Other	2		2.9
Total	70		100.0

TABLE XXI

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS REGARDING INTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Question	Frequency Distribution of Responses and/or Rank (N = 83) N	%	Yes	$\bar{X}$	Rank	Interpretation
Attended Selected Activities						
National Convention		56.6	47		3	
Sophomore Motivation Conference		86.7	72		2	
Chapter Officer Leadership Training		86.7	72		1	
Mode for Excellence		34.9	29		5	
Alumni Camp		50.6	42		4	
Washington Conference Program		24.1	20		7	
Oklahoma Junior Livestock Show		54.2	45		6	
American Royal (exhibition)		18.1	15		8	
National Western Livestock Show		6.0	5		9	
Given a Choice Would You . . .						
Attend More Livestock Shows	2	2.5				
Attend Fewer Livestock Shows	22	27.2				
Attend the Same Number	57	70.3				
Total	81	100.0				
How Beneficial Is . . .						
State Vo-Tech Supervisory Staff				3.27		Beneficial
Teacher Trainer Institutions				2.94		Beneficial
Local School Administration				2.93		Beneficial

When the activities were ranked the Sophomore conference and chapter officer training conference were ranked highest and the national convention ranked third. Another finding in this table was that given a choice 57 (70. 3 percent) of the teachers would attend about the same number of shows. The teachers were asked to respond to how beneficial the state staff, teacher trainer institutions and local school administrations were. The response was beneficial for all three areas with mean responses being 3.27, 2.94 and 2.93 respectively.

The teachers were then asked to indicate how each of these three groups could be of more benefit. Eight responded that the state staff needs to be more aware of local community needs and six responded that local administrations needed to be more familiar with Agricultural Education.

The teachers were asked what the "one major constraint" in their program was. Twenty-nine responded "inadequacy of funding" and 11 responded "the lack of enough time."

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concluded the following:

1. The impression of Oklahoma Agricultural Education teachers toward the new curriculum adopted in 1990 is favorable.

2. The researcher concluded based upon the impressions of the teachers that the favorable aspects of the new curriculum were a result of an opportunity to teach new and fresh subject matter;

however, based upon the impression of the teachers the curriculum needs improvement.

3. Based on the findings that the teachers preferred special inservice relative to the new curriculum be offered at the PI level, it was concluded by the researcher that they would prefer more localized instruction rather than graduate level courses for example.

4. Since only very few of the teachers have no difficulty in maximizing instructional time, the researcher concluded that additional emphasis needs to be placed on classroom techniques which will enable the teachers to maximize instructional time. Furthermore, it was concluded by the researcher that curtailing the number of visitors to AGED departments and the number of in and out-of-school activities may maximize instructional time.

5. Since some of the teachers indicated that their curriculum materials were not current and since at least one respondent does not use curriculum materials, it was concluded by the researcher that some students may be ill prepared and therefore have fewer marketable skills.

6. Although the teachers indicated that the communication between AGED professionals was for the most part somewhat effective it was concluded by the researcher that improvements are needed in all areas and techniques for communication.

7. Since the teachers indicated that the system for addressing problems is merely effective it was concluded by the researcher that improvements need to be made in the system as substantiated by the

fact that some teachers feel it is not effective at all.

8. Based upon the teachers' rankings of selected intracurricular activities, the researcher concluded that leadership activities were of most importance, more especially, the Chapter Officer Leadership Training Program and the Sophomore Motivational Conference. The researcher further concluded that selected livestock exhibitions were of least importance as perceived by the teachers.

9. The researcher concluded that the teachers perceived their respective communities wanted them to attend more livestock shows than they were willing to attend.

10. The researcher further concluded that more teachers would prefer to attend a less number of shows than more shows; however, most teachers appear to be content with the number they are presently attending.

11. Pertaining to the mission, goals, and objectives of Agricultural Education it was concluded by the researcher that the teachers perceived the state vo-tech supervisory staff to be more beneficial than the teacher trainer institutions or local school administration.

12. Based upon the perceptions of the teachers, in order to achieve an ideal local program, additional funding will need to be provided and time management practices will need to be implemented.

13. Typical Respondent. Based on the aforementioned conclusion, the researcher finally concluded that the typical respondent was favorable toward the new curriculum because it was a

fresh new subject area and wanted in-service at the PI level. The respondent has slight difficulty in maximizing instructional time because of activities and visitors and would be helped by implementing time management practices. The typical respondent respondent is using very current core curriculum materials and feels that the communication means are somewhat effective and PI meetings need more education. Further the typical respondent feels that means used to address problems is effective and leadership activities are most important with livestock show attendance frequency is four to six. Also vo-tech staff, teacher trainer institutions and administrators are beneficial towards the goals of Agriculture Education and funding is the one major constraint.

Recommendations

Based upon the findings and conclusions of this study the researcher presents the following recommendations:

1. More educational inservice is needed at the PI level and that consideration be given to having full time state staff specialists and/or other AGED teachers provide it.

2. In order to maximize instructional time it is recommended that limitations be placed on the number of interruptions and activities during regularly scheduled classtime and that local school administration assist in monitoring the number of interruptions and activities. It is further recommended that the teachers implement time management practices.

3. It is recommended that current core curriculum materials be made available to those teachers who do not have current core curriculum materials. It is further recommended that all teachers utilize the core curriculum.

4. It is recommended to make necessary improvements in order to increase the level of effectiveness of communication between AGED professionals regardless of the method of communication.

5. It is further recommended that further measures be taken for enhancing the effectiveness of the system for addressing problems at competitive events, more especially those measures which all the teachers would perceive to be very effective. It is further recommended that either the OVATA Board of Directors or the appropriate OVATA committee should be the authority for final decision whereby reprimand may be necessary.

6. Relative to intracurricular activities it is recommended that teachers give considerations to attending and/or participating in state and/or national leadership activities because of the perceived importance of those activities.

7. Relative to the number of livestock shows attended by a chapter the needs of the community should be taken into consideration; however, to achieve a well rounded program, discretion needs to be used by the teacher.

8. Based on the perceptions of the teachers and subsequent conclusions of the researcher it is recommended that the state vo-tech supervisory staff continue in their present role pertaining to the mission, goals, and objectives of Agricultural Education

because they are beneficial to the teachers and that they take advantage of opportunities to bestow upon the teachers a high level of moral support and appreciation of the efforts of each and every teacher.

Recommendations for Additional Research

The following recommendations are made in regard to additional research. The recommendations are judgments based on having conducted the study and on the examination of the findings of the study.

1. A more detailed study on specific impressions of each publication of the new curriculum.

2. A more comprehensive study on teachers' impressions of grievances concerning competitive activities.

3. A similar study conducted in the other supervisory districts.

4. A more comprehensive study on how class time is being spent.

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APPENDIXES

Instructions: This questionnaire addresses "your perception or practices" concerning three important areas of concern within Agricultural Education: curriculum; communication; and extra-curricular activities. Based upon the cumulative responses, recommendations will be made; therefore, please respond to each question asked. Also, please feel free to write any additional comments you believe to be pertinent and appropriate. (Anonymity is assured).

CURRICULUM

1. What is your impression of the new curriculum you implemented this year and are teaching? (check one)

___ (4) Very Favorable
___ (3) Favorable
___ (2) Undecided
___ (1) Not Favorable

2. For what reason(s) is your impression favorable (or unfavorable)? Please indicate:_____
_____

3. Pertaining to the new curriculum you are currently teaching, what type(s) of assistance do you believe would be of most value to you? (check one)

___ Special In-service offered at the P.I. Level?
___ Full-time State Staff (Specialist)?
___ Assistance provided by other Ag. Ed. teachers?
___ Formal instruction (graduate level courses)?
___ Business and/or Industry Representatives, etc.?
___ Other, please list_____

4. How difficult is it for you to maximize the amount of instructional time you have within each class period each day? (check one)

___ (4) Very difficult
___ (3) Difficult
___ (2) Slightly Difficult
___ (1) Not Difficult

5. For what reason(s) is it difficult (not difficult) for you to maximize the amount of time you spend teaching during each class period?

_____
_____

6. In your opinion, what would you consider to be some realistic approaches which would enable you to maximize your instructional time in class: (May check more than one)

___ Implementing time management practices.
___ Have a secretary monitor phone calls.
___ More FFA activities on weekends.
___ Decrease the number of FFA activities in which your chapter participates.
___ Utilize the Core Curriculum more extensively.
___ Other, please list_____

7. How current (or up-to-date) is the core curriculum materials you are presently utilizing? (check one)

___ Very Current (1988 or newer)
___ Current (1985 or newer)
___ Not Current (1984 or older)
___ Do Not use the Core Curriculum

COMMUNICATION

8. **With regard to enhancing communication among and between Ag. Ed. professionals, please rate the level of effectiveness for each of the following:**

	Very Effective (4)	Effective	Effective (3)	Effective	Somewhat (2)	Not (1)
Circular letter	___		___		___	___
Outlook	___		___		___	___
P. I. Meetings	___		___		___	___
D.T.N.	___		___		___	___
Corrsp. through local Adm.	___		___		___	___
Other, please specify_____	___		___		___	___

_____

9. **Please indicate suggestions for improving the following:**

Circular letter_____

_____

Outlook_____

_____

P. I. Meetings_____

_____

Other, please specify_____

_____

10. **Relative to communication among and between Ag. Ed. professionals, how effective (in your opinion) is the current "system" for addressing problems, grievances, and/or concerns in competitive events? (check one)**

___ (4) Very Effective
___ (3) Effective
___ (2) Somewhat Effective
___ (1) Not Effective

11. **When there are problems, grievances, and/or concerns in competitive events, who should be the primary authority for decisions whereby reprimand may be necessary? (check one)**

___ OVATA Board of Directors
___ Appropriate OVATA Committee
___ State Staff
___ Local Administration
___ Other, please list_____

INTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

12. **Concerning extra-curricular activities, please rank the following in order of importance (1 through 9), and please indicate whether or not you participated this year.**

Rank		Attended Yes	No
___	National Convention	___	___
___	Sophomore Motivation Conference	___	___
___	Chapter Officer Leadership Training	___	___
___	Made For Excellence	___	___
___	Alumni Camp	___	___
___	Washington Conference Program	___	___
___	Oklahoma Junior Livestock Show	___	___
___	American Royal (Exhibition)	___	___
___	National Western Livestock Show	___	___

13. **Please indicate the number of livestock shows <u>your community</u> believes to be important that you participate in each calendar year. (check one)**

___ One to three
___ Four to six
___ Seven to nine
___ Ten to twelve
___ Thirteen or more

14. How many livestock shows do you, personally believe are important for you to participate in each calendar year?

___ One to three
___ Four to six
___ Seven to nine
___ Ten to twelve
___ Thirteen or more

15. Given a choice would you . . .

___ ...Attend more livestock shows?
___ ...Attend fewer livestock shows?
___ ...Attend about the same number of livestock shows each year?

16. How beneficial are each of the following groups to the mission, goals, and objectives of Agricultural Education in Oklahoma?

	Very Beneficial (4)	Beneficial (3)	Somewhat Beneficial (2)	Not Beneficial (1)
State Vo-Tech Supv. Staff	___	___	___	___
Teacher Trainer Institutions	___	___	___	___
Local School Administration	___	___	___	___

17. In your opinion what can each of the following groups do to be of more benefit to you in your program?

State Vo-Tech Supervisory Staff:_____
_____
Teacher Trainer Institutions:_____
_____
Local School Administration:_____
_____

OTHER AREAS OF CONCERN

18. As an Agricultural Education teacher, what is the "ONE MAJOR CONSTRAINT" which prohibits you from having "your" ideal local program?

_____
_____
_____

19. Any other comments you would like to make?

_____
_____
_____
_____

VITA

G. T. Moody

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED OKLAHOMA AGRICULTURE EDUCATION TEACHERS' PERCEPTION AND/OR PRACTICES RELATIVE TO CURRICULUM COMMUNICATION AND ACTIVITIES

Major Field: Agricultural Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, June 10, 1962, the son of Ted R. and Connie L. Moody.

Education: Graduated from Collinsville High School, Collinsville, Oklahoma, in May, 1980; received Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture Education from Oklahoma State University in December, 1984; completed requirements for the Master of Science degree at Oklahoma State University in May, 1991.