

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 328 741

CE 056 925

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 TITLE Current and Expected Roles in Supervising Agricultural Science and Technology Programs in Utah.
 PUB DATE Dec 90
 NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Vocational Association (Cincinnati, OH, December 1990).
 PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS Administrator Role; *Agricultural Education; Educational Practices; Educational Trends; Futures (of Society); *Instructional Leadership; Secondary Education; *State Supervisors; *Superintendents; *Teacher Attitudes; Vocational Education; *Vocational Education Teachers
 IDENTIFIERS *Utah

ABSTRACT

A study examined the perceptions of Utah vocational agricultural teachers regarding the current and expected role of state and local supervision in agricultural education. The target population for the study was all agricultural science and technology teachers in vocational programs during the 1988-89 school year (64 teachers). Through persistence of the researcher, a 100 percent return rate was achieved in teacher response to a questionnaire about their perceptions of the role of state and local supervisor in terms of the degree of authority. The teachers rated the state supervisor as currently having the greatest authority in directing improvement of instruction activities, followed by research and evaluation activities, administration, and public relations. They rated local supervisors' degree of authority as highest in the area of public relations. The teachers rated improvement of instructional activities as having the highest degree of authority by state supervisors in the future, followed by research and evaluation activities. They expected the local supervisor to have the highest degree of authority in public relations activities. The study concluded that the teachers perceived the local supervisors as having more authority, both current and expected, than the state supervisors. This perception could continue to handicap the state supervisor in bringing about innovative programs in Utah. (17 references) (KC)

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CURRENT AND EXPECTED ROLES IN SUPERVISING
AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS IN UTAH

Gary Straquadine

Introduction and Theoretical Base

The authority for state supervision and administration of local programs of vocational agriculture was established by the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. The Act mandated the development of a state board for vocational education for the planning of vocational education. The Act also provided for state-level administration of vocational education, including a state director and state-level supervisors of specific instructional areas (Roberts, 1971).

Early experts in educational administration identified the major function of supervision as the improvement of instruction (Wright and Allen, 1926). Dougan (1954) listed the perceived role of state vocational agriculture supervisors to include holding of conferences with teachers, attending workshops and technical meetings, and observing classroom teaching. Cornell (1976) found that providing leadership assistance in the improvement of teaching techniques was one of the most important tasks as perceived by district and state supervisors of trade and industrial education in Alabama. He concluded that providing leadership and assistance in the improvement of teaching techniques was one of the most important tasks as perceived by teachers, supervisors, and local administrators.

Schroeder (1962), in studying the role of state supervisors of vocational agriculture, collected the perceptions of the expected role of state supervisors from local teachers, local administrators, and state supervisors in eight states. He found that state supervisors identified their role as more directive than local teachers and administrators. Nasstrom and Baker (1979) identified a degree of discourse in considering the role of state and local supervision. They found that 79% of the secondary principals and superintendents in Indiana believed that vocational classes should be approved according to state standards, but only 19% believe that state and federal agencies should determine the time allocated for vocational education classes. Roberts (1971) concluded that the primary goal of state supervision is the improvement of instruction. He further stated that federal funds were designed to stimulate states to provide state-level supervision of vocational programs. Wenrich and Wenrich (1974) reported that the emphasis in states has shifted from supervision of instruction to providing services. The role of state supervisors has shifted from one of "looking after"

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to one of leadership.

Changes in federal funding and state philosophy toward vocational education has resulted in numerous changes in state-level supervision in vocational agriculture. Karelse (1984) identified some of those changes in reporting the status of reductions in state staffs. The least desirable scenario was the use of outside, non-experts in supervision (Mannebach, 1985). Wentling and Barnard (1982) offered rationale for a shift toward state-controlled federal compliance. They stated that the attitude toward program evaluation was greater for state-level administration than for the local education agency. Barrick and Straquadine (1988) found that the role of the state supervisor, as perceived by the teachers, increased between 1980 and 1986.

Olsen (1985) argued that local supervisors of vocational agriculture have the ultimate responsibility for planning and conducting relevant, high quality programs. This could be confirmed by Straquadine's analysis of vocational agriculture program quality (1987). His national study concluded that the structure of state-level supervision did not contribute significantly to a standardized measure of program quality.

The Tenth Amendment legislates that education is the obligation of the state government (Friedman, 1971). However, local authorities have a vested interest in local programs. The role of state supervisors regarding local vocational programs may continue to change as the federal and state roles in education evolves.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the perceptions of Utah agricultural science and technology teachers (formerly known as vocational agriculture teachers) regarding the current and expected role of state and local supervision in agricultural education. The study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the current role of the state and local supervisor of agricultural science and technology as perceived by the Utah agricultural science and technology teachers?
2. What is the expected role of the state and local supervisor of agricultural science and technology as perceived by the Utah agricultural science and technology teachers?

3. How does the current role of the state and local supervisor compare with the expected role in Utah agricultural science and technology?

Methods and Procedures

The target population for the study was the teachers of all agricultural science and technology programs in Utah that were considered vocational programs during the 1988-89 school year. The list of teachers in the population was provided by the state supervisor of agricultural education in Utah. Since only 64 teachers comprised this population, all individuals were studied. The design for the study was descriptive survey. Data were collected by mailed questionnaire and used to describe the perceptions of the agriculture science and technology teacher regarding the current and expected role of the state and local supervisor.

The instrument used in collecting the data was similar to those used by Barrick (1981) and Barrick and Straquadine (1988) in studies of the role of state and local supervisors in agricultural education. Teachers responded to 37 activity statements related to the state and local supervisor. The 37 statements were designed to be grouped into the four sub-scales (1) administrative activities, (2) improvement of instruction, (3) public relations, and (4) research and evaluation. Teachers indicated their perceptions of the role of the state and local supervisor in terms of the degree of authority. The degree of authority was indicated on a scale of one (no authority for the activity) to seven (a high degree of authority for the activity). The reliability coefficient for each sub-scale of the instrument ranged from .82 to .90. One-half of the population (n=32) was asked to indicate the current degree of authority of the state and local supervisor; the other half (n=32) were asked to indicate the expected degree of authority of the state and local supervisor.

Results and Conclusions

Through support of the state director of vocational education and the persistent efforts of the researcher, a 100% response rate was achieved. Since all members of the population did respond and generalization of the results were limited to Utah agricultural science and technology, inferential statistics were not necessary in analyzing the data.

Teachers responding to the current role of the state and local supervisor began teaching with a bachelor's degree in agricultural education. They averaged

11.4 years of teaching agricultural science and technology. Teachers responding to the expected role of the state and local supervisor averaged 12.1 years of agricultural science and technology teaching. Similar to the former group, the respondents in the expected group began their teaching career with a bachelor's degree in agricultural education.

The first objective of this study was to describe the agricultural science and technology teacher's perception of the current role of the state and local supervisor. The teachers rated the current role of the state supervisor on 37 statements regarding supervisory activities. The 37 statements were designed to be grouped into the four categories; administrative activities, improvement of instruction, public relations, and research and evaluation. The teachers rated the state supervisor as currently having the greatest authority in directing improvement of instruction activities (see Table 1). The teachers rated research and evaluation activities as currently having the second highest degree of authority. Administrative activities, followed by public relations activities, completed the teacher's rating of the state supervisor's current degree of authority.

Table 1

Teacher Perceptions of the Current and Expected Role of the State and Local Supervisor in Utah Agricultural Science and Technology

Activity	State Supervisor		Local Supervisor	
	Current*	Expected	Current	Expected
Administration	2.93	3.48	5.37	6.00
Improvement of Instruction	3.83	4.81	5.17	5.83
Public Relations	2.84	3.51	5.71	6.41
Research & Evaluation	3.78	4.55	5.44	5.90

* 32 responses to the current role; 32 responses to the expected role

Response Scale: 1 = no authority in directing the activity
 4 = some authority in directing the activity
 7 = high degree of authority in directing the activity

The teachers also rated the current degree of authority the local supervisor has in directing the four categories of supervisory activities. The teachers rated the local supervisor's public relations activities as having the highest degree of authority. Research and evaluation activities were rated as the second highest degree of authority the local supervisor provides in supervising the agricultural science and technology program. Administrative and improvement of instruction activities were rated third and fourth, respectively. Teachers perceived local supervisors as having a lower degree of authority for these two activities.

The second objective of this study was to describe the expected role of the state and local supervisor. As Table 1 indicates, the teachers' perceptions of the expected role of the state supervisor rated improvement of instruction activities as having the highest degree of authority. The next highest degree of authority was identified as research and evaluation activities. The teachers' perceptions of the expected role of the state supervisor identified the lowest degree of authority for public relations and administrative activities.

Finally, the teachers rated the expected role of the local supervisor in supervising the agricultural science and technology program. The teachers expected the local supervisor to have the highest degree of authority in public relations activities. The teachers expected the local supervisor to have a higher degree of authority in completing administrative activities than research and evaluation activities. The teachers rated the local supervisors as having the lowest degree of authority in completing improvement of instruction activities.

The third objective of the study was to compare the teachers' perceptions of the current role of the state and local supervisor with the expected role in Utah agricultural science and technology. An overall comparison of the current and expected ratings of the four categories of supervisory activities revealed that the teachers expected a higher degree of authority than was currently provided.

The teachers rated the current role of the state supervisor related to improvement of instruction activities as having the highest degree of authority. Similarly, the teachers expected the state supervisor to have the highest degree of authority in providing improvement of instruction activities. The teachers rating current state supervisor activities identified research and evaluation

activities as having the second highest degree of authority. The teachers rating the expected role of the state supervisor responded in a similar manner. Although the teachers rating the current state supervisor activities indicated that administrative activities provided the third highest degree of authority, the teachers rating the expected role placed this activity as having the lowest degree of authority. Instead, the teachers rating the expected role of the state supervisor indicated that public relations activities should have a higher degree of authority than administrative activities.

The teachers rated the highest and lowest degree of authority for the current and expected role of the local supervisor in a similar pattern. The teachers' perceptions of both the current and expected role of the local supervisor indicated that the highest degree of authority was found in public relations activities. The perceptions of both the current and expected role rated the lowest degree of authority in improvement of instruction activities. The teachers rating the current role of the local supervisor indicated that the second highest degree of authority was related to research and evaluation activities. The teachers rating the expected role of the local supervisor indicated that research and evaluation activities should not have the second highest degree of authority. Instead, this group of teachers indicated that administrative activities should have the second highest degree of authority and that research and evaluation activities should have the third highest degree of authority.

Educational and Practical Importance of the Study

An important conclusion can be drawn in comparing the current and expected role of the state and local supervisor. All teachers, both current and expected, rated the local supervisor as having a higher degree of authority in supervising activities in all four categories. The teachers have indicated that the state supervisor does not have greater authority in supervising any of these categories. Parks (1986) stressed the importance of leadership at the state level for vocational agriculture. Such issues as goal setting, planning, cultivating linkages, consolidating resources, and promoting programs were enumerated. Yet, this study indicated that the teachers believed that these issues were the responsibility of local supervision.

Fuhrman, Huddle, and Armstrong (1986) stated that balancing strategies of compliance and assistance were important state supervisory actions. However, administrative activities were rated below the mid-point of the scale; teachers did not realize the degree of authority the state supervisor has in administering agricultural science and technology programs. Perhaps a misunderstanding of compliance versus assistance contributes to this low rating of state administrative function.

Independent of the mean rating of the four supervisory categories, the teachers ranked the current and expected role of the state and local supervisor in an interesting pattern. While the mean rating of the state supervisor was below the local supervisor, the state supervisor's current and expected role related improvement of instruction was highest among the four categories. This could be interpreted as the teacher's understanding of the primary role of the state supervisor. In a sense, the teachers indicated that if the state supervisor is to exist, he/she should have the greatest degree of authority in improving instruction.

Finally, in reviewing the major findings of this study, one must consider a principal conclusion and recommendation of the Committee on Agricultural Education in the Public Schools (1988). This groups stated that the success of reform in vocational agriculture programs relies on innovative programmatic leadership at the state national levels. Therefore, leadership in state-level supervision should be taking the present system of agricultural education in Utah to the heights advocated by this reform committee. However, according to the current and expected perceptions of the teachers, the local supervisor has a greater role in the supervision of the agricultural education program. This perceptions could continue to handicap the state supervisor in bring about innovative programs in Utah agricultural education.

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