

# THE VISITOR

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Devoted to the Interests of Agricultural Education in Minnesota Schools

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## STUDENT TEACHING

An important phase of the professional preparation of teachers is the practical experience they get as cadet teachers. The plan in operation at the University of Minnesota is to provide the opportunity for each senior to work for several weeks during August and September in a good high school agriculture department. The students work under the direction of a good teacher who has in operation a strong, well-balanced program for the community. The activities during this time are devoted largely to observation of teaching procedure and to become acquainted with the philosophy of the school, the physical plant, the high school students, and the community as a whole. Other participating experiences are provided according to the ability of the student teacher. The seniors then return to the University to continue their professional and technical preparation. At some convenient time during the year, they are assigned for two or more weeks of directed teaching experience. This is usually carried on in the same school where the first apprenticeship work was done. As cadets the seniors gain experiences in all phases of the complex program of activities of the agriculture teacher. The question that is frequently raised is "What do they get out of it?"

At the suggestion of a number of agriculture teachers, the seniors, on their return to the University, were asked to write a brief summary of what they observed, experienced and learned as cadet teachers. The replies are interesting, if not illuminating from the standpoint of what they did not observe as well as for what they did observe and learn. From our knowledge of individual differences in people, it is only natural that there would be a wide range in what the cadets really got from their activities as student teachers. In general all the seniors returned with a better idea of the work of a teacher of agriculture. They gave evidence of professional and personality growth that will be an important factor in making the senior year at the University more profitable and interesting to them.

### The Cadet's Own Story

The following material was prepared by the students and is presented in their own way for whatever interest or value it might serve. It represents a summary of the brief written reports of the student teachers in answer to the question "What impressed you most in your apprenticeship teaching activities?"

After summarizing twenty-four papers turned in by seniors in Agricultural Education written on their experiences as student teachers, the following points represent those that seemed to have impressed these young men. Among the most common of the comments made, the close relationship between the teacher of agriculture and his students and their parents, seemed to have impressed the largest number of the student teachers. Almost fifty per cent of the students made some mention of this point.

Running a close second as a popular observation of these student teachers was the importance of *good personality* as a characteristic of good teachers of agriculture. There were approximately thirty per cent who noted this fact. Another factor of major importance as shown by the large number of students mentioning it is the method used by agriculture teachers in the introduction of Agriculture to the freshmen in high school. As several boys gave the different methods used in their particular cases, it seems that that might be one of the things in which student teachers feel they can learn something by their experiences in these departments. Falling next in line as the number reporting, we find the interests of the student teachers in the farm practice program of the various teachers and the extent of the agriculture teacher's work outside of the classroom. It seems no more than proper that these two factors should go pretty much together for the out-of-school activities of the agriculture teacher, for the most part, is dealing with the farm practice work of students and adults.

Some of the other items of interest which were reported by several students are: the

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farm visits made by the agriculture teacher, the fact that the agriculture teacher owned a farm, the discipline in the classroom, the interest of the community in the Agriculture program. Now that we have made a general summary of the reports of these men, let us consider some of the individual cases as they were reported.

One of the men reported that his most vivid recollection of his observation and directed teaching experiences was that of a realization of the fact that a teacher deals with human beings, a distinctly heterogeneous group all having different likes and dislikes. He pointed out that the teacher where he did his student teaching knew a great deal about each student's personal problems that he was well acquainted with each boy's home conditions. The teacher knew who would be his best workers, and who would be his shirkers even in his freshman class on the first day. He compared the situation to a game of chess in which the player knew every move before he started playing.

Another student teacher reported that the agriculture instructor spent the first few days in having the new students give an account of what they had done during the summer and also tell something about their home farm. To this observer, it seemed quite worthwhile for the teacher to use a few days in learning to know one's pupils and their problems, and by so doing build up the confidence of the pupils. This will enable the agriculture teacher to do a much more successful job of teaching his classes because of the better cooperation the pupils will give him.

Quoting another senior with reference to his observations of the teacher, he began one paragraph in the following manner: "One of the very outstanding things I observed as a student teacher was that the instructor not only gave the boys subject matter in the classroom and supervised their farm practices, but he also takes an interest

in their personal life." He gives the students bits of advice which are character building, and which will tend to shape a desirable life; whether they enter agricultural occupations or some other occupation. He goes on to say that this is fully appreciated by the student as is shown by the fact that they frequently come to the agriculture teacher with their personal problems. This student teacher also observed that the agriculture teacher works his farm practice program in so that the boys considered this a privilege rather than a chore. No students are advised to take Agriculture who are not likely to become interested in agricultural work as a future occupation.

One student teacher was very much impressed by the superior techniques of the agriculture teacher in gaining the interest and confidence of his community. This student stated his impression of the teacher in the following manner: "The instructor is not only accepted by the entire community, he is whole heartedly approved." This young man gives an example of a case in which there was a family of boys, only one of whom attended school beyond the grades, but who are now some of the best students in part time and evening classes. The youngest boy of this family, after attending high school, convinced his brothers of some of the values in approved practices. This boy is now doing graduate work in Agronomy at the Nebraska University, and his brothers are some of the most active students in the agriculture teacher's evening school and part time classes. To this student teacher this was an example of one of the accomplishments of a good teacher of agriculture.

"Thirty bewildered freshmen filed into the classroom—thirty rural boys, shy and ill at ease in the huge high school among self-assured city boys and girls. To me, it seemed as if a sudden noise, as the dropping of a book, would scatter them like a covey of quail." This was the opening paragraph of one of the student teacher's papers. He then tells how the agriculture teacher was able to put these new boys at ease and make them feel that in Agriculture they could express their own opinions and discuss their home farm problems with the teacher. Thus, the teacher started his program of Agriculture, first discussing the agriculture of the home farm, the home community, then the state, and finally into a study of Agriculture in the United States as a whole.

At one school the introduction of milk testing to the freshmen in Agriculture seemed to have impressed the student teacher very much. Many farms were visited by this young man while he was at the school, and he felt that such visits were an ideal type of experience. This young man also made a comment on how much he learned

during the time that he was actually conducting classes. He concludes with the statement that his four weeks of student teaching were the most educational weeks of his educational career.

That an agriculture teacher's job is a big one covering a considerably greater scope than that of other teachers was clearly realized by one of the student teachers. The following line was taken from his paper: "When school closes at 4:00 o'clock, the teacher of agriculture is just beginning to do his most important work for the day." In this particular case, the department was only one year old and the student was impressed by the size of this instructor's farm practice program. Not only the students, but their parents showed a keen interest in the Agricultural program, and the work of that department. This student teacher was surprised at the host of questions that the boy's mothers and fathers shot at the agriculture teacher when he made a visit to a farm.

Several papers gave attention to the method in which the course of study in school is planned. In most instances it was pointed out that during the first few days the pupils and the agriculture teacher, working together, planned the program for the year. In one paper the student teacher stated that the first day several students brought up problems that existed on their home farms. Taking these problems as a basis for planning, the instructor started to map out the course of study for the year. By a democratic vote with a few directing remarks from the agriculture teacher, the class voted on and adopted what subject matter was to be covered, and how much time was to be devoted to each phase of the program. In another case the student teacher said that the same system was used in planning a course of study in evening school. The farmers were given a suggestive list of subjects and they voted on the item in which they were most interested. In this way it was decided what would be covered in the evening class periods. Thus, more interest was shown in the work by the farmers.

Some of the student teachers were impressed by certain peculiarities of the department in which they worked. In one case the young man reported on the different devices used by the agriculture instructor in teaching. For example, he told of a large cardboard pig which the agriculture instructor had made and painted black so it could be written on with white chalk. This pig was used when the subject of swine was being discussed. Some of the other devices mentioned were the posters on which "talking cows" were used to introduce new subjects and to call attention to new reading materials.

One of the student teachers reported an unusual situation which he had encountered during his four weeks. In this case the Federal Land Bank had offered the agriculture instructor a proposition that they would provide a promising boy the opportunity to gain ownership of an eighty-acre farm through a period of tenancy on the farm. This student teacher pointed out how important it was in such a case that the agriculture teacher know his boys and know them well enough to make such a recommendation. Here was a case where the right kind of a young man could be started well on the road to success. How should the agriculture teacher go about selecting a boy for this position?

Another student teacher who had a chance to share his period of experience between two departments gave a very interesting account of the differences of the two departments. In one community the agriculture teacher had the full cooperation of the boys, their parents, and the school officials whereas, in the other school, no one seemed to be very much interested in Agriculture as a subject for the rural boys in the community. This fact he said was due, in part at least, to the difference in the school boards. The agriculture teacher was required to teach several subjects besides Agriculture in the second case.

One student teacher was greatly impressed by the courtesy shown by the students in the department in which he worked as a student teacher. He was much concerned about the splendid program which this agriculture instructor was following. This, to him, was a very important part of the agriculture teacher's program. In the classroom there was no discipline problem as this young man stated it, but rather a class management program. The students in this department carried on their work as well when the teacher stepped out of the room as they did when he was there.

Taken separately, these student teachers had a great number of varied experiences which to them seemed to be important parts in the make-up of a successful teacher of agriculture. Many of them noted some of the same things in the different departments while others noted entirely different things which were characteristic of the particular place they visited. Some things, such as good personality, are generally agreed upon by all as essentials of a good teacher. Other things are shown to be important if adapted to a particular situation. In conclusion, it is fair to say that in all cases, the student teachers feel that their experiences in directed teaching and observation work will be extremely valuable to them in their future teaching activities.

## SELECTION AND GUIDANCE OF TRAINEES

In 1939 in cooperation with the Office of the Dean of the College of Agriculture and the University Testing Bureau, the Division of Agricultural Education began a program of selection and guidance of candidates for agriculture teacher training. The development of this program included, first, an analysis of the criteria that are considered to be determining factors in teaching success. A master list of these criteria was developed from studies carried on in the general and vocational agriculture teaching fields. The studies included, among many others, those of Anderson (Pennsylvania), Floyd (Missouri), Magill (Virginia), Stewart (New York), and Sutherland (California). From this master list, nine criteria were selected as being significant in vocational agriculture teaching as follows:

1. General academic ability (intelligence).
2. Proper attitude toward rural life (interest in farming).
3. Interest in teaching.
4. Farm experience.
5. Social proficiency and interest.
6. Duration of interest in teaching.
7. Emotional stability (balanced personality).
  - a. Satisfactory social and economic experiences.
  - b. Satisfying student family and community life.
8. Physical fitness (physical energy and vitality).
9. Skill in expression.

The second phase of the program deals with the measurement of the possession of these criteria by the candidate. This is done by means of a clinical technique which makes use of scholastic aptitude, interest and personality tests, for which the validity and reliability are known, and personal questionnaires and interviews. The data are then

organized into profiles which are kept with the personal information in individual student folders. A logical diagnosis of the student's probability of success in agricultural education can then be made. The candidates are diagnosed as "high probability candidates" and "low probability candidates." The teacher trainer passing on the merit of admitting a candidate into the agricultural education curriculum thus has his judgment fortified materially in comparing the profiles of the candidate in question with the typical "high and low probability" profiles. This program has distinct possibilities from the standpoint of guidance as well as selection. Where the student who meets the scholastic prediction requirements enters tentatively into agricultural education upon enrollment, a relatively extended period in which to study and guide the student is provided. Through such a plan, as described above, three classifications of candidates may be determined on the basis of the clinical data for each one: (1) those who have high probability of succeeding as agriculture teachers and will be encouraged to continue in the agricultural education curriculum, (2) those who obviously do not have the necessary scholastic and personal qualities necessary for successful pursuance of the agricultural teacher training curriculum and the occupation and who, therefore, are guided into other alternative fields in which they are more likely to be successful and find satisfaction, and (3) those who have no clear-cut physical, emotional, or scholastic disabilities for agricultural education but who, on the basis of the evidence, could profit from individual guidance and counsel in the selection of subjects and activities that will enable them to be better teachers than they now indicate. Thus, the program is helpful not only in selecting successful candidates but also forms a basis for providing experiences which will enable the accepted student to develop somewhere near his maximum potentiality for teaching vocational agriculture.

L. H. H.