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THE INTEGRATED COURSE OF STUDY PHILOSOPHY AS INTERPRETED BY SENIORS IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Teachers of agriculture are very much interested in the integrated course of study technique for teaching agriculture. Occasionally teachers encounter some difficulty in organizing the local course of study according to the philosophy of integration as expressed in educational literature. In the agricultural education professional courses, an attempt is made to clarify to the seniors the meaning of integration as applied in the study of agriculture. Students are given the opportunity to present their interpretation in the preparation of a term paper. The following material is taken from some of the term papers prepared by seniors who graduated during the 1942-43 school year. These students emphasize the fact that it is the boy who is to be integrated, not the course of study.

Mr. Keith McFarland proceeds with the following ideas expressing his interpretation of the integrated course of study philosophy.

"The philosophy of the integrated course of study is an attempt to make clear what the final result of the work of the agriculture teacher should be, and to make certain suggestions or to outline the general methods to be used in achieving the final result.

Our goal is to "teach the farm boy to farm the way farmers farm"—in a practical, common sense way, utilizing methods of teaching those activities which will do the most toward developing the farm boy in information, qualities of leadership, and initiative and give him at the same time, a foundation based on practical experience that will enable him to go out after graduation and put into actual use, information gained from his courses in vocational agriculture. In addition, the instructor of agriculture should have as a goal the general improvement of farming practices and conditions in the community. His closest tie with the adult farmers in the community is through the farm boy. By instituting a program that will tend to carry its effect from the boy to the family and entire farm business, the agriculture teacher may, in part, accomplish his objective. These fundamentals underly any concept of vocational agriculture instruction that we have today.

Any concept containing the word "integration" has, as its purpose the unification of an object or of objects "into a complete and perfect whole," as stated by Webster.

Integration expresses the resultant of the interaction between an individual and a series of experiences, by which he learns and is influenced. Since knowledge is but a written or oral form of relating something that has at one time been experienced by someone, and since we learn through experiencing and the reasoning we do as a result of these experiences, we have a knowledge of the basic processes involved in developing the well-rounded individual.

Because we live in a complex and many-sided society, a society built and supported by culture developed as a result of various conditions or happenings, we realize that the individual is forced to conform to the "rules" of that society. In the majority of cases this is not difficult, since the things we do today and the social laws which we obey were largely developed to meet or as an answer to some need of the human body or mind. However, in many cases we find individuals who are not in full accord with these social customs. This condition may be due to several reasons, among them ignorance of the proper action ranking high and having the greatest significance in the case in question. Here is an opportunity, a responsibility of the agriculture teacher, who has supposedly reached a stage of integration somewhat advanced in relation to that of the students under his supervision. A conscious and systematized attempt to integrate the farm boy with his social environment should form one of the fundamental planks in the platform of the agriculture instructor.

This plan of attempted integration has, however, a greater significance along a different line; namely, that of integrating the boy in the agriculture program. What we shall attempt to do is to make the boy into the well-rounded "whole" by bringing him into contact with agricultural experiences and information, and combining the theoretical with the actual in such manner that the total result will be a boy well grounded in experience and possessing a knowledge of the approved or correct practices that should be followed in conducting a successful farm business.

The agriculture instructor has four years during which his influence on the farm boy will be the strongest. He must, then, distribute this time in the manner which will give him the best, final result.

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The integrated course of study, as I understand it, tends to divide itself into the following operational groups:

Agriculture I—A general, exploratory course in agriculture. It is designed to give the students an insight into the field of agriculture, its scope and possibilities, and to initiate a greater appreciation of the field. Appropriate farm practice activities will be started.

Agriculture II—Deals with the organizational phase of the home farm, and gives the boy a chance to orient himself as an individual on his home farm. Here the boy begins to organize the farm; he begins to set up ultimate objectives; and he begins to plan how he can reach these objectives. The boy, according to his interest, opportunity, age, and needs, will decide upon a few steps he can take to build up production; he will talk the matter over with Dad, and then get underway. A rather accurate view of the conditions of the various farm enterprises is necessary before this boy can take definite steps toward meeting any shortcomings. The teacher, in conference with the boy and his father, can examine the farm enterprise and locate those enterprises that are not up to par, and the boy will be able to see where corrections can be made. At the same time, the methods of the farm operator may be influenced as an indirect result of the conference. To make the corrections, the boy seriously begins a long-time program of farm practice, involving two aspects: apprenticeship with Dad, and productive projects. Through the combination of the two, with the emphasis upon the apprenticeship with Dad, and the study and planning which must be done in order to make these programs a success, we have a definite trend toward the realization of our goal which is to integrate the boy with his environment. The group instruction which was prevalent in Agriculture I has given way in the second year to individual learning to a large extent.

Agriculture III—Farm operation. In the first two years of instruction, the boy has been more or less "oriented" in agriculture, and then has taken basic steps in the study of

the organization of the farm. He should by now have a somewhat accurate picture of what is right and wrong in the major and minor enterprises on the home farm, and have taken preliminary steps in the correction of some of these conditions. In his third year, his study becomes more specific, more detailed, and he begins to delve rather deeply into subject matter of a more specific nature. His "apprenticeship" program has grown and widened its scope; his projects, based on approved practices and chosen with the idea in mind that the end product will help to improve the home farm, will have increased in number and significance. The individualized study method is still in use. It is, however, not the sole study method. An effort should be made to keep the class on an organized basis, and following a rather definite program as a group throughout the year.

Agriculture IV—A continuation of Agriculture III, with an attempt to summarize activities and results, to solidify the gains the boy has made, and to build a foundation for further continued effort on the home farm in a search for more complete farming success.

The chief value of following such a program as suggested above lies in the fact that at the end of four years the boy has not merely a group of unrelated facts that he must attempt to piece together in order to derive value from them, but he has a cohesive, well-organized knowledge of the phases of the farm enterprises, gained in a manner similar to the way the farmer farms. His material is integrated, has "association" value, is meaningful, because he has been able to see his goals and work toward them through definite processes. He will have been able to measure his achievements in the light of the standards met, and he will know the processes he must follow in developing a well planned and successful farm program."

Mr. Francis D. Newkirk submitted the following on the integrated course of study: "The great feature of the integrated course of study in agriculture is the integration or unification of the boy's experiences in school with his home farm needs. The course of study is planned to improve the living conditions and earning power on the farm of the boy's parents. His experiences in the agriculture class are experiences which should enlarge on his previous experience in farming and cause him to bring home ideas which will improve and build up the home farm.

The farm boy has already come in contact with farm life and farm society. He must learn to react intelligently and correctly to his environment. The experiences which he has had will make a basis on which to further build his development. The course of study is made up of the experiences with which we will deal from year to year and the work will be organized in accordance with their individual need and importance.

There are certain problems which will come up from each individual boy's farm home; nevertheless, the problems will be sufficiently alike so that each class can be kept together. The chickens will have to be reared, fed, and culled whether they are on a farm with an average egg production of 80 eggs per hen or 250 eggs per hen. The dairy cattle will have to be fed and cared for whether they are from a herd with an average of 150 pounds of butterfat or of 450 pounds of butterfat.

The first year of high school agriculture should give special emphasis to guidance since a large per cent of the pupils in the agriculture class will never be farmers. Many of them will not be in a position to participate in a farm practice program to any extent; however, the pupils should get a concept of what agriculture is and what some of the related problems are. They will study poultry with some of its possibilities and problems; dairy, hog raising, beef production, and so on. They should get a survey of the various fields, but they will not cover all the material about any certain subject.

By the second year, a number of the boys and girls will have dropped out; thus the Agriculture II class will be composed largely of farm boys who are interested in farming as an occupation. Therefore, they will be in a far better position to carry on farm practice programs. The learning activities of the boys will be more individualized than during the freshman year; they will begin to set up their ultimate goals for their farms, such as a flock average of 200 eggs per hen, 2,000 pounds of pork per litter, and 450 pounds of butterfat per cow. The boys will start looking for ways to reach their goals or objectives. The parts of the subject matter which the boys can understand will be taught. Experts on subjects such as hogs, dairy cattle, and others may be brought in to speak to the boys. This leads to the conclusion that the year of sophomore agriculture should be a period of organizing the farm.

The third year shall be a period of getting into operation some more of the approved practices and studying further into each phase of farming. More approved practices shall be set up each year. This year the work shall be to get a vision of the entire farm as a well-rounded-out business.

During the fourth year the boy should make out a plan for his own farming operation . . . his ultimate objectives. He will use the information he has gained thus far and he will make an even more comprehensive study of each enterprise than before. If the work is graded so that the boys get what they understand each year, there will not be any trouble from the seniors losing interest.

As the various subjects are taken up, each boy considers his home farm in planning ways of improvement. For example, in raising the average production of the home farm

herd of cattle from 170 to 400 pounds of butterfat, what shall be done on the home farm? The slough grass hay can perhaps be replaced with alfalfa, drinking cups installed, feeding improved, and the poor cows replaced "with good ones."

Edward J. Sletton expresses his point of view as follows:

'Integration as defined by Webster is, "the act or process of integrating; specifically, act or process of making whole or entire; formation of a whole from constituent parts; to form into one whole; to make entire; perfect." In this respect the integrated course of study is attempting to integrate the constituents of an environment into a life to make that life whole, entire and perfect. It is merely the act of instilling intelligent behavior into the life of a student so that he can react intelligently to the forces of his immediate environment. An integrated individual then is one who has an appropriate association with his environment.

In order to accomplish this result, it is important to shift our thinking from subject matter to people. "Teaching the individual, not subject matter" is the method which must be employed. We must think of the intelligent behavior of the individual. We do not think of fixing up an intelligent mixture of fertilizer, but we do think, as teachers, of preparing an individual who can perform the job of mixing the fertilizer intelligently.

A farm boy coming into class is affected by certain farm situations to which he has learned to react. He has had to learn to do things correctly as far as associations are concerned. In teaching, we want the farm boy to learn to use the experiences which others have discovered long before his time. Some of these experiences may be gained in Ag. I, some in Ag. II, Ag. III, etc. During this time the boy is constantly interacting with his environment, and by so doing, is building up an intelligent behavior.

The integrated course of study is not synonymous with individualized learning or study, but the individualized study activity is used extensively in the integrated course of study procedure. Many teachers have gone astray by thinking too much of learning facts and too little about developing the individual student. We want to adjust the boy to his group environment, his family, and his economic pattern."

Walter T. Bjoraker presents the following as his interpretation of the integrated course of study procedure. He states that it is a result of a combination of what he gained in class plus his own reading, thinking, and experience.

"The integrated course of study has to do with the individual integrating him into his environment, both social (or cultural) and the practical. As the integrated course of study is concerned with the individual and not with subject matter, then our techniques

of teaching must be so designed to accomplish this work with the individual. Each boy is different, and each boy's environment is different, consequently a little different approach has to be used for each student. Recognizing the differences in the students, we must also realize that as human individuals they are more alike than different. The main objectives in teaching agriculture are (1) to help the boys to live a more satisfying life on the farm and (2) operate the farm so they will have a satisfactory income.

In attempting to reach these objectives, this is the approach I would use: the first year I would discuss the importance of agriculture in the high schools, and I would try to instill in their minds a respect for agriculture as a life's work. Some discussion would come up concerning vocational choice and the opportunities in other fields as well as in agriculture. This would give an opportunity for interviews and individualized help through consultation with the instructor. Since, perhaps approximately fifty out of one hundred of the boys are destined to earn their livelihood in some non-agriculture field, it is up to the agriculture teacher to help these boys get the information they need in making their choice.

During the first year some fundamental facts concerning agriculture would be taught. Not too many things would be attempted the first year, but what is started should be done well. The first year is more of an orientation period, and it leads up to the integrated course of study technique as it is normally understood.

In the agriculture classes we try to help the students develop the skills, knowledges, and attitudes needed by a proficient farmer. The work is laid out on the basis of a continuous course, rather than three or four units of nine months each. The subject matter is selected so that the students progress from the simple to the more difficult. In class there would be group participation while the core material is presented. This would give an introduction and a general knowledge of the enterprise that every student should know. By skillful questioning one should be able to draw from the pupils some expression of their interest and what they feel they have yet to learn concerning the subject. If you do that, then it becomes their course of study. Then have the students work out the approved practices for each enterprise as applicable to their home farm. Above all, do not hand out approved practices to the boys on each enterprise but instead have the boys work them out for their home farm situation. It will cause them to do some constructive thinking, and it will give them a chance to work to their best ability. When the boys make their own approved

practices to correct or adjust the home farm situation, then the class work becomes real to them and not a lot of uninteresting, cold storage material.

As the boys are working out these approved practices, they are fitting their studies to their home situation, yet at the same time using similar core material. The question is raised—what about the boys who do not have that enterprise on their home farm? My suggestion would be that, if a point system of evaluation is used, they may omit it, or they may work out a set of practices for some farm with which they are familiar that has the enterprise, or they may study that enterprise in a general way and then get started on a certain enterprise that is of interest to them. As a result of this, you may have a number of things being studied at the same time by the boys during the supervised study period.

In dealing with the problem that arises from having boys in class who are not from the farm, I would say that one should make such adjustments as are possible with the individual boy. I feel that it would be better that a few boys in the class have a problem in adjusting themselves to the methods of teaching than to have the entire class subjected to the "canned facts method"; namely, the textbook method.

The long-time program of farm practice would work right in with the class work. A student would start out with few enterprises and gradually add more. He should gradually strive to get more difficult things into operation. Ideally, a boy would have a project one year, but that would divert back on the apprenticeship basis the next year, and so on each year. This would meet the requirements for projects and would accomplish our end—that of getting the boy integrated into his total environment. It would also avoid any conflict with Dad as might be the case if the student was encouraged to retain ownership of each project, and continuously add more enterprises.

Some method such as self-evaluation would work well with such a technique. If a student is allowed to grade several of his classmates on certain points, and also himself, he will be able to compare results, and he will know that his grade is a measure of his true progress and not just a grade his teacher may decide to give him.

This integrated course of study, which is a vertical and horizontal arrangement of study sequence, is valuable as a teaching technique because the boy becomes a greater focal point of interest. It integrates the boy into his environment and it is applied to an integrated situation—the home farm of the student. It emphasizes the consideration of boys as individuals with likes and dislikes, and it teaches prospective farmers to farm the way proficient farmers farm."