

by BAICK, Dai Hyen

The Role of Vocational Agricultural Education in
Developing Agricultural Technology in Korea

A question might be asked, how can agricultural technology be developed and improved through vocational agricultural education to meet agricultural manpower needs, and to bring about higher levels of agricultural productivity which is the very essential procedure to maintain the peace in Korea. It is hoped that the subject discussion in this seminar be directed to answering this question.

When the national economy, welfare of the nation, and a modernization of the young Republic of Korea is discussed, the public opinion indicates that industrialization and higher levels of agricultural production is absolutely necessary. Agriculture in Korea produces the most part of raw materials needed in industry. In this point, vocational agricultural education in Korea is the most important position in developing necessary agricultural manpower which is the key to the national development.

Generally speaking, to continuously improve vocational agricultural education, the first consideration must be given to the nature of agriculture and its relations to vocational education in agriculture. Governmental policy, public relationship, industrialization, laws, and administrative efficiency throughout government are also factors influencing the agricultural productivity. Industrialization and the form it takes are particularly important factors in determining the nature of a vocational agriculture education program. All these are linked together as the spokes of a wheel on

which the national economy can move.

Vocational education in agriculture, particularly at the high school level, should be reoriented with major emphasis placed on the development of agriculturally generalized skills and knowledge applicable to a variety of occupations. Along with this point of view is the allegation that vocational education in agriculture in Korea to this date has placed major emphasis on specialized skill training through a highly specialized system. This traditional structure of vocational education in agriculture has been characterized by the programs of specific skill training in the various academic and occupational categories such as in agronomy, forestry, livestock, farm machinery, horticulture, veterinary science, agricultural cooperation, sericulture, home economics, civil engineering, food processing etc. This inherited structure of vocational agriculture training, however, is becoming less flexible in providing the degree of occupational versatility essential for a period when many young members of the nation can expect to change occupations several times and in accordance with the changes that take place in farming and business related to agriculture. Of course, there is little to be gained by arguing the relative value of specialized knowledge and skills for a particular occupation. However, there is ample research attesting to the fact that successful performance and advancement in almost any occupational area require technical knowledge and skills from different aspects of vocational education.

One of the major aspects of economic progress in agriculture is the increased specialization of farms and the transfer of tasks formerly performed on farms to non-farming occupation. During periods

of rapid technological change and economic progress the agribusiness sector expands and provides employment for part of the labor formerly used in farming.

As a general rule, the demand for farm products does not advance in proportion to the increases in incomes of consumers. The demand for marketing and processing services, however, advance at a much more rapid rate than the demand for farm products. Likewise, as agriculture becomes more specialized, farmers turn to the non-farming agribusiness sectors for chemicals, equipment and other supplies. As a result of this growth in farm related industries more vocational agriculture school graduates are employed in the processing and marketing of farm products than are employed on farms. In many farm related industries some general knowledge of technical agriculture subjects and a general understanding of the processes of agricultural development are highly desirable. In other words, in these industries the types of training and experience needed are not necessarily the same as that needed in farm employment.

Much of the structural adjustment in agriculture in the future will occur through a transfer of vocational agriculture school graduates to nonfarming agribusiness sectors. This fact must be recognized in our vocational agriculture education programs. Better education and training of farmers will speed up this process. It is folly to think that all vocational agriculture school graduates will have an opportunity to operate profitable commercial farms or that they will find attractive employment in farm related occupations. The processes of growth and development dictate that this shall not be the case.

It is in these forces of growth and development that employment opportunities are created for the young rural members who migrate. As consumers experience increased incomes, they raise the prices of nonfarm goods and services in relation to the prices of farm goods and services. This action provides incentives to expand the production of nonfarm commodities thereby creating employment opportunities for migrants from the farms. If a vast majority of the farm youths are to participate fully in the fruits of economic progress, they must be equipped with knowledge and skill which are necessary to enable them to meet the qualifications for employment in those occupations which will be most rapidly expanding during the coming years.

The task for vocational agriculture education, therefore, is two-fold. First, it must insure that programs are available in both rural and urban areas to all who have an interest in and a need for occupational exploration and preparation in vocational agriculture, and second, it must plan and implement programs that enhance the development of general occupational competencies in addition to competencies unique to occupations involving knowledge and skill in vocational agriculture subjects.

Dait Baile