

A History of Professional Associations for Teacher Educators in Agriculture:1929 to Present

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Abstract

The history of professional organizations for teacher educators in agriculture is long and diverse. As formal vocational agriculture programs were established in the early 1900s it became evident that there was a need for professionally trained vocational agriculture teachers. This demand for agriculture teachers resulted in the new profession of teacher trainers, which evolved into teacher educators in agriculture in departments of agricultural education in land-grant universities across the country. The professional organizations started as informal social gatherings to discuss critical issues facing agricultural education in the 1920s. As the century progressed, so did the teacher education profession and the corresponding organizations. The organizations expanded their scope to include formal administrative structures, scholarly conferences, refereed research journals, professional development activities, research conferences, and innovative poster presentations. Throughout their history, the professional organizations for teachers reached out to collaborate with other professional organizations in the areas of education, vocational education, teacher education, and scientific agriculture. This historical research study presents a synopsis of the 92-year history of professional organizations for teacher educators in agriculture.

Keywords: teacher education in agriculture; agricultural education; professional associations

Introduction

Formal agricultural education in the United States started during the 1800s with the passage of several groundbreaking pieces of legislation. The Morrill Land Grant University Act of 1862 initiated federal funding for land-grant universities to teach technical agriculture in each state. Agricultural experiment stations were established and funded by the Hatch Act of 1887. County agricultural extension activities were supported with the passage of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 (Danbom, 1995). At the same time that agriculture instruction was expanding in institutions of higher education, formal agricultural education was getting established in secondary schools throughout the country. The growth of high school agricultural education culminated in the passage of the Smith-Hughes Vocational Education Act of 1917 which provided federal funding for vocational agriculture programs.

The expansion of secondary vocational agriculture programs resulted in a need for more professionally-trained agriculture teachers. The Nelson Amendment to the 1907 agricultural appropriations bill provided the first federal funding to support the training of agriculture teachers (Hillison, 2010). Throughout the early decades of the 20th century, the number of departments of agricultural education in colleges of agriculture grew significantly. This resulted in a growing number of instructors, itinerant teachers, and teacher trainers preparing future secondary vocational agriculture teachers.

Any professional endeavor ultimately leads to the need for professional organizations for participants. Teacher education in agriculture is no different. As the number of teacher educators in

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agriculture grew there was a growing need for a professional organization to promote the future of teacher education in agriculture.

Theoretical Framework

Throughout the 19th century, American educational institutions grew significantly. Formal secondary education led to the establishment of high schools in large urban centers across the country. A need for teachers with both content and pedagogical knowledge became evident. The first formal teacher training institutions were the Troy Female Seminary which opened in 1821 and the Columbia School at Concord established in 1823. Throughout the later decades of the 1800s, a network of state normal schools was established to prepare future teachers. The first normal school was established in Lexington, Massachusetts in 1839 (Webb, Metha, & Jordan, 2007). Pulliam and Van Patten (2007) reported that:

In 1871, 114 schools for teachers replied to an inquiry about programs and enrollments made by the United States Bureau of Education. At least 70 normal schools were receiving some state support in 1875. By 1900, there were 345 normal schools reported in the United States (p. 182).

For many years normal schools were the sole source of teachers for school systems. Four-year universities entered the business of teacher preparation late in the 19th century. Pulliam and Van Patten (2007) stated:

During the late 19th century, the universities became increasingly involved in teacher education. Teacher training at the college or university level had been offered at a limited number of institutions as early as 1830s, but it was not until toward the end of the 19th century that universities entered the field of teacher preparation to any measurable extent.

As teacher education grew within colleges and universities, colleges and departments of education began to appear. Mirel (2011) wrote that “Schools and colleges of education became an integral part of American universities, and state-created ‘normal schools’ (charged specifically with preparing teachers) became colleges in their own right” (p. 6).

As normal schools and colleges of agriculture and education grew, a disagreement developed as to who would be responsible for preparing vocational agriculture teachers. “By 1908 a major push was made to have normal schools train agricultural education teachers” (Herron & Hillison, 1996, p. 29). Meaders (2008) wrote that President Snyder of Michigan Agriculture College attended the annual meeting of the National Education Association and “heard a report that in Michigan the Teachers Institute at Ypsilanti...had proposed starting a program to provide agricultural instruction in the pre-service program for rural teachers (p. 7). In the end, teacher education in agriculture was divided between the two types of institutions. Hillison (1987) reported that “The place of the normal school for the preparation of agriculture teachers became primarily one of emphasizing elementary teachers” while “the land-grant colleges and universities assumed the role of preparing secondary agriculture teachers” (p. 13).

The first teacher educators in agriculture had no university programs to prepare them for their positions. Pioneer teacher educators in agriculture came from a variety of backgrounds (Hillison, 1998; Foor & Connors, 2010). Rufus Stimson, who developed the home project plan had degrees in philosophy and divinity (Foor & Connors, 2010). The founders of the Future Farmers of Virginia had degrees in horticulture, liberal arts, and animal science (Hillison, 1998). Foor and Connors (2010) concluded that: “Having teaching experience at the elementary, secondary, and collegiate level in agricultural subjects, early professors were able to bring real experiences to their students even though agricultural education was in its infancy” (p. 28).

As formal vocational agriculture programs became established and grew, there was an increased need for academically prepared teachers of agriculture. This need for agriculture teachers required university teacher educators at the nation's land-grant universities. The growth of university teacher education in agriculture naturally resulted in the development of a professional organization for these teacher educators.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research is to document the history and development of professional organizations for teacher educators in agriculture at land-grant universities in the United States. The objectives that directed this study include:

1. Determine the historical foundations of professional associations for teacher educators in agriculture.
2. Determine the history and development of programs and activities within the professional associations for teacher educators in agriculture.
3. Identify the history of affiliations between teacher education in agricultural professional organizations and other educational organizations.

Methods

This study utilized an historical research methodology. Primary and secondary sources were used to obtain data and address the objectives of the study. Primary sources were utilized whenever possible (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, 1996). Primary sources included proceedings of meetings, organization documents, textbooks, articles in *The Agricultural Education Magazine*, and personal communications. Secondary sources included books, research manuscripts, and organization webpages. The researcher externally criticized each document by reviewing its authors and evaluating its authenticity. Whenever discrepancies were found multiple sources were reviewed to determine the correct information. Multiple sources were used to triangulate the information and establish credibility of the results and conclusions for the study.

Results

National Education Association

As agricultural education in secondary schools and institutions of higher education grew throughout the later decades of the 19th century, a need for professional organizations became clearly evident. Davis (1910) reported that, "In 1893, at the International Congress of Education held under the auspices of the Association [National Education Association], agriculture had a place on the program" (p. 446). One of the focus areas of the National Education Association (NEA) at the time was the "rural school problem." In 1903 the NEA formed a committee on Industrial Education in Schools for Rural Communities. This committee eventually led to the formation of a National Committee on Agricultural Education and a Department of Rural and Agricultural Education within the National Education Association (Davis, 1910).

Agricultural Education Associations

As the first decade of the 20th century passed, many secondary and post-secondary agriculture

teachers organized professional associations within their own states (Stimson & Lathrop, 1942). Noll (1968) writing about Walther H. French, Professor of Agriculture at Michigan Agriculture College (MAC) stated, "This amazing man, Walther H. French...was one of the founders of the National Association for Agricultural Education, and its first secretary" (p. 31). Another professor of agricultural education and a colleague of French's, B. A. Walpole, served as "president of the Michigan Association for the Promotion of Agricultural Education" (Noll, 1968, p. 70). The latter was probably the first professional organization for secondary agriculture teachers in the state of Michigan.

Another early organization for agriculture teachers was the American Association for the Advancement of Agricultural Teaching. It was organized in 1911 and remained in existence for 20 years (Stimson & Lathrop, 1942). While this organization primarily promoted agricultural education at the secondary level, "The association also did much to arouse the consciousness of officials and teachers of agricultural colleges to their opportunities and responsibilities in training agricultural teachers for secondary schools" (p. 574). At its first meeting in Columbus, OH in November, 1911, the program consisted of papers including "*What is Being Done to Prepare Teachers of Secondary Agriculture*" by A. C. Monahan of the Bureau of Education in the U.S. Department of Interior and the "*Need of Trained Teachers and the Kind of Training They Should Receive for Secondary School Work in Agriculture*" (Stimson & Lathrop, 1942, p. 575). At its 1912 annual meeting topics discussed included the opportunities and responsibilities of land-grant colleges of agriculture for the preparation of agriculture teachers and the curriculum of special classes in teacher education in agriculture.

American Vocational Association

As vocational education grew around the turn of the century, professional organizations for vocational teachers became established. Two separate organizations, the National Society for Vocational Education and the Vocational Education Association of the Middle West joined forces in 1926 to become the American Vocational Association (A New Association is Born, 2002). The newly formed AVA included "committees representing the different sections in 1926 were agricultural education, vocational guidance, trade and industrial education, commercial education, home economics education, part-time education and rehabilitation education" (A New Association is Born, 2002, p. 23). The agricultural education committee eventually evolved into the Agricultural Education Division. This division would include secondary vocational agriculture teachers, teacher-trainers, and state supervisors of agricultural education.

Ten-Year Teacher Trainers Club

As university professors of agricultural education joined the new AVA, they decided they wanted their own group within the Agricultural Education Division. At the 1929 AVA Convention in New Orleans, a group of men met and formed the Ten Year Teacher Trainers (Ekstrom, 1968; Hillison, 2010). In an article titled "Agricultural Education at the AVA Convention" in the *Agricultural Education Magazine*, Chapman (as cited in Ekstrom, 1968, p. 2) stated, "For the first time a group of 'Ten-Year men' in agricultural teacher training got together for a luncheon meeting. They voted to meet for a full day preceding the next AVA convention for informal discussion and sociality." This organization of teacher-trainers with 10 years of experience, is similar to Ten-Year Clubs for secondary vocational agriculture teachers that were established during the early decades of the 1900s and are still in existence today.

The purpose of the Ten-Year Trainers club was to "afford opportunity for the frank and open discussion of problems in the field of agricultural education among the more experienced members of

the profession” (Ekstrom, 1968; Hillison, 2010). The organization met for a breakfast during the annual AVA Convention. The program for the meeting included designated speakers on problems in agricultural education followed by the open discussions among the members. This tradition of a speaker and topic, not announced until the breakfast, would eventually lead to the “mystery speaker” still included in annual meetings of teacher educators in agriculture (Ekstrom, 1968; Hillison, 2010; Ten-Year Teacher-Trainers to Celebrate Tenth Anniversary of Their Organization, 1938). The organization remained in existence from 1929 through 1950.

Teacher Trainers in Agricultural Education

As the profession of teacher educator in agriculture became more formalized and grew, it became evident that an organization for all teacher educators was needed. The Ten-Year Trainers group was limited to only those men with 10 years of experience in teacher education. At the Ten-Year Trainers breakfast in 1949, V. G. Martin, President, was instructed to “formulate a plan of organization to include all teacher trainers in agricultural education” (Ekstrom, 1968, p. 5). This plan was presented and adopted at the 1950 breakfast, thus disbanding the Ten-Year Teacher-Trainers group.

With the 1951 AVA Convention came the establishment of a new organization, the Teacher Trainers in Agricultural Education group. This was the first organization that was officially recognized by AVA and given representation on the AVA Advisory Council (Ekstrom, 1968). It also allowed teacher educators to be recognized by the Agricultural Education Division of AVA and serve on standing committees related to professional relations, research, and policy. The Teacher Trainers in Agricultural Education membership grew throughout the 1950s as the need for more secondary vocational agriculture teachers grew after World War II. More vocational agriculture programs required more vocational agriculture teachers which required more teacher trainers in agriculture at the nation’s land-grant universities. The Teacher Trainers in Agricultural Education group remained an important part of the AVA family until 1959.

American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture

As the 1950s came to a close the profession of teacher education in agriculture was also changing. More and more teacher trainers had completed bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees in agricultural education in colleges of agriculture. This resulted in an elevation for the teacher trainer to professional status. University professors of agricultural education were expected to not only teach undergraduate and graduate courses, supervise student-teachers, and work with secondary vocational agriculture teachers, they were expected to conduct scholarly research and publish their writings in order to meet strict promotion and tenure standards within the land-grant university system.

This new professionalism resulted in the formation of a third organization for teacher educators in agriculture. In 1960, the American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture (AATEA) was formed. The breakfast speaker and discussion had grown into the presentation and distribution of scholarly research papers at the annual meeting.

The teacher educators who organized the AATEA posited that the new organization should 1) affiliate with general education groups, especially those with rural education interests, 2) publish a quarterly report or journal, 3) consider developing a yearbook, and 4) initiate an annual award for service and achievement in agricultural education (Ekstrom, 1968). The AATEA members then decided to officially affiliate with the NEA Department of Rural Education.

AATEA Activities

As the AATEA grew in the 1960s the scope of the organization's activities also expanded. Now that the university professors of agricultural education were recognized members of the academy within higher education, funds became available for graduate teaching and research associates within departments of agricultural education. The AATEA Committee on Publications began to advertise and recruit graduate students via annual announcements of graduate fellowships and assistantships published in *The Agricultural Education Magazine*.

The "mystery speaker" event grew in popularity and stature, resulting in the publication of two volumes of printed speeches from previous "mystery speakers." The first volume which included speeches from 1934 through 1955 was compiled by T. J. Horne, Head of Agricultural Education at Virginia Tech. The second volume was edited by H. R. Cushman and included speeches from 1957-1966 (Ekstrom, 1968).

A major activity of the new AATEA organization was the development of a professional research journal for the profession of teacher education in agriculture. Ekstrom (1968) reported that Milo Peterson was named the first editor of the new *Journal of the American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture* in 1961. However, the *Journal of Agricultural Education* history website lists R.W. Cline as the first editor from 1961-1964 (*Journal of Agricultural Education*, n.d.). Two issues of the Journal of AATEA were published in mimeograph format in 1961.

The publications of the AATEA expanded during the 1960s to include a quarterly newsletter and the publication of the first textbook on teacher education in agriculture, *Teacher Education in Agriculture* (Cardozier, 1967). V. R. Cardozier from the University of Maryland served as editor with chapter authors including Bender (Ohio), Hamlin (Illinois), Krebs (Maryland), Peterson (Minnesota) and Woodin (Ohio) (Ekstrom, 1968). A second volume was edited by Arthur Berkey (1977).

The AATEA also developed an awards structure to recognize excellence among its members. The first award developed was the Distinguished Service Award. Dr. H. M. Hamlin of the University of Illinois was the first recipient of the new award in 1962. Subsequent recipients were S. S. Sutherland (1963), Carsie Hammonds (1964), Milo Peterson (1965), H. M. Byram (1966), and C. W. Hill (1967) (Ekstrom, 1968). Additional awards implemented by the AATEA were Life Membership and Honorary Membership.

American Association for Agricultural Education

As agricultural education changed throughout the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, the AATEA also changed. Membership was expanded to include university faculty in extension education, 4-H youth development, agricultural communications, and agricultural leadership. Membership was no longer limited to those professors working solely in teacher education in agriculture. University departments of agricultural education were implementing new academic programs in addition to teacher education. As a result, the AATEA members decided to change the name of the organization to reflect the expanded membership. In 1992, the organization's name was changed to the American Association for Agricultural Education (AAAE). The revised mission stated that the "AAAE is dedicated to studying, applying, and promoting the teaching and learning processes in agriculture" (AAAE, n.d.).

The AAAE organization has expanded its activities to include regional and national conferences, independent of the Association for Career and Technical Education. Conferences

include refereed research paper presentations, research and innovative idea poster presentations, professional development activities, and special interest groups (SIGS). The research papers progressed from mimeographed copies, to printed proceedings, to CD-ROM electronic copies, to conference websites.

The *Journal of the American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture* also changed to reflect the changing nature of the organization's membership. In 1976, the journal began publishing the Distinguished Lecture which is the manuscript for the annual "mystery speaker."

In 1983, as the organization expanded its awards structure, the journal began recognizing the outstanding journal article for each volume. In 1998, the name was changed to the *Journal of Agricultural Education* (Journal of Agricultural Education, n.d.). The *JAE* also expanded to four printed issues per year before becoming a fully electronic on-line journal in 2011.

Following the precedent set by the AATEA, the AAAE commissioned the publication of a new textbook on teacher education in agriculture. A newly revised textbook was published in 2010 and edited by Torres, Kitchel, and Ball (2010).

The AAAE also built on the long history of the "mystery speaker" with two new speaker series. The Barrick Seminar on Teacher Education was established to bring noted education experts to the AAAE conference to discuss the teacher education profession. AAAE members who work in the area of extension education initiated the Knapp Seminar to bring extension education professionals to the conference to discuss the latest issues facing the extension field.

Affiliate Organizations

From the very beginning of the Ten-Year Teacher Trainer group, the organization has reached out to collaborate with other educational, vocational, and professional organizations. The list of organizations that teacher educators have been affiliated with are listed in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Affiliate Organizations

<p>American Vocational Association - Agricultural Education Division (now ACTE) American Vocational Association - Council on Education Associated Organizations of Teacher Education Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education Association of Leadership Educators Council on Agricultural Science and Technology National Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association (now NAAE) National Association of Supervisors of Agricultural Education National Education Association - Department of Rural and Agricultural Education Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists</p>

Conclusions and Recommendations

The history of professional organizations for teacher educators in agriculture is long and diverse. The profession has progressed from an informal group of teacher educators with 10 years of experience, to an official group of all teacher educators affiliated with the American Vocational

Association, to an independent professional organization including agricultural education professionals in a wide variety of fields. A summary of the professional organizations for teacher educators in agriculture is listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Summary of professional organizations for teacher educators in agriculture (1929 - 2021)

Organization	Years in Existence
Ten-Year Teacher Trainer	1929 - 1950
Teacher Trainers in Agricultural Education	1951 - 1959
American Association for Teacher Educators in Agriculture	1960 - 1991
American Association for Agricultural Education	1992 - Present

The organization which started as an informal group meeting once per year for a scholarly and social breakfast, has expanded to a large organization with numerous activities including conferences, a refereed journal, poster presentations, professional development workshops, scholarly committees, special interest groups, and an awards structure.

Throughout its 92-year history, the members of the four organizations have reached out to collaborate with other professional organizations related to education, teacher education, vocational education, and agricultural sciences. The organization has evolved as departments of agricultural education have expanded to include the disciplines of extension education/4-H youth development, international agriculture, agricultural communications, and agricultural leadership

The AAAE has developed its scholarly research from a non-refereed journal into regional and national research conferences, and a premier refereed electronic journal. The organization has also expanded its research activities to include a standing committee on research and the publication of a National Research Agenda for Agricultural Education (AAAE, 2011; Roberts, Harder, & Brashears, 2016).

Based on the results of this historical research study the following recommendations have been developed. A complete history of the professional organizations for teacher education should be researched, published, and made available to all members of the AAAE organization. The history of teacher education in agriculture should be distributed to all departments of agricultural education preparing future secondary agricultural education teachers. The history of the organizations should be incorporated into all undergraduate and graduate courses in agricultural education which cover teacher education or the history of agricultural education.

A special page could be added to the AAAE website to serve as a clearinghouse for the history of the organization, its publications, officers, awards, etc. A comprehensive list of all historical information related to the organizations should be developed and included on the AAAE history website.

The history of agricultural education includes many different levels. A comprehensive history should include land-grant universities, colleges of agriculture, agricultural experiment stations, state extension services, departments of agricultural education, 4-H clubs, the Future Farmers of America,

the New Farmers of America, and teacher educators in agriculture. The 92-year history of professional organizations for teacher educators in agriculture is a rich and valuable resource that should be preserved for the future generations of professors of agricultural education to study and cherish.

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