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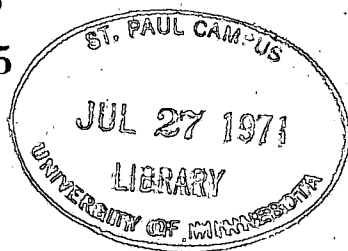
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Teaching in Agricultural Economics

The teaching group decided in their initial meeting that the topics to be discussed should include:

1. Undergraduate and graduate curricula.
2. Teaching methods.
3. Graduate programmes.

Prior to taking up these topics the group had useful discussion on the differences in educational systems in the eight countries represented in the group.

Building curricula

A review of the curricula in the countries represented in the discussion group showed similarities in subject-matter emphasis although there were differences in the organization of educational systems. Some practical agriculture was offered at the primary level of the first twelve years of instruction. At the agricultural college level in agricultural economics, basic economics is emphasized in the institutions although general economics may be offered outside the college of agriculture. In some institutions the instruction in economic principles is offered by the agricultural economics faculty.

Following this discussion it was agreed that the demand for men well trained in agricultural economics is expanding though a decreasing percentage of agricultural economists go into farming. Among the employments enumerated were high school instruction, agricultural advisory service, college teaching and administration, professional



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farm management and a wide range of executive and technical positions in industry and business where a background of agricultural knowledge is desirable.

With the growing breadth of demand for students trained in agricultural economics, it is becoming increasingly difficult to provide a curriculum for all needs. In part the instruction should emphasize principles and demonstrate procedures to help students meet the differing situations they will encounter in future employment.

Teaching methods

Teaching methods in the various countries represented were discussed. In general the proportion of time to be devoted to lectures, demonstrations, discussions and field trips depends in part on the level of teaching and the size of the class. In large classes, it was agreed that discussion groups should be limited to 20-25 students; the use of television for lectures to large groups might become a desirable development.

It is difficult to evaluate the efficiency of teaching methods. It was agreed, however, that more training is needed in teaching methods for professional agricultural economists who are to be teaching at the college level. Training could be strengthened by selected courses taken in educational psychology and philosophy, in particular. Also teaching practice seminars are recommended for those preparing to enter the teaching profession.

Recent experience in bringing together in teaching seminars people representing different disciplines is a promising development. There is need for administrative officials to give due recognition to superior teaching ability, because of the tendency for the time devoted to teaching and research to conflict to the detriment of the individual's greatest usefulness. More attention needs to be given to planning the individual's programme of work.

Graduate programmes

Major points of discussion regarding graduate instruction included:

1. Prerequisites.
2. Specialized versus general work.
3. Thesis requirements.
4. Language requirements or alternatives.
5. Nature of examinations.

It must be recognized that students entering upon graduate training will have had differing preparation for graduate study. This makes it desirable for some students to take intermediate courses to round out their education.

There is a tendency for many students to emphasize research training, although they may enter the teaching field. Previous mention has been made of non-economic courses desirable for teachers at the undergraduate level.

Good basic training in economics is essential especially if it has not had adequate attention at the undergraduate level. Because of the wide scope of interests of graduate students, specialized courses in agricultural economics are desirable, such as marketing, policy, farm management and land economics. While it is undesirable to fragmentize courses too greatly, it is desirable for students to have a number of courses available from which to select.

Programmes for graduate students should be planned to equip them with generally applicable analytical tools. It is especially desirable to limit descriptive courses for foreign students.

In general theses are required for both the masters and doctors degrees. The master's thesis is desirable if students in the first year of graduate study are not certain they will continue for the doctorate. If a student plans to take a doctor's degree he may save valuable time for additional course work by not writing a master's thesis. Foreign students preparing for thesis work should be encouraged and assisted to study problems related to their native country.

Language requirements differ between countries and between educational institutions, varying from no additional language to two foreign languages. A definite trend is to require only one language and to substitute mathematics or some other subject for another language. It was agreed that this is a desirable change.

Examinations should be designed to show the student's competence in his field of study. Recognizing that an oral examination may not show a student's full ability, it is believed that both written and oral examinations should be given.