EMERGING TRENDS IN SECONDARY AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION: INTegrating MODular TECHNOLOGY IN SOUTH FLORIDA

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Introduction

One of the challenges confronting agricultural education in the 21st century is how to adjust its program goals and delivery methods to meet the dynamic agricultural industry environment. While, agricultural education is a profession deeply rooted in rich traditions, unless it is willing to change, the profession runs the risk of diminishing its relevance in the dynamic info-technology age. The need for innovative approaches is greatest in the public education sector where a greater emphasis on accountability, higher performance standards, especially in reading, math and science, the infusion of technology, the emergence of a plethora of new electives offerings, have all placed incredible burden on secondary agricultural education program. Not only is agricultural education being challenged to justify its relevance under the new dispensation, it also has to compete for a dwindling pool of eligible students. It is in response to these new challenges that the Miami-Dade Public School system introduced modular agricultural laboratories at selected schools.

Purpose

The purpose of the poster is to present a snapshot of an innovative middle-school agricultural education program in South Florida which has integrated a computer-based modular instructional technology into a traditional vocational agricultural education program. The goal of the poster presentation is to demonstrate a new model of secondary agricultural education which while, keeping such traditional VoAg practices such as FFA, supervised agricultural experience programs; integrates innovative technology, and interdisciplinary collaboration into its program offering. The poster also hopes to generate discussions concerning the implications of modular technology for pre and post-service professional development of agricultural educators.

Major Points to the Presented

- History and funding for the program
- Key elements of modular instructional technologies
- Setting up and managing a modular laboratory-issues and challenges
- Multimedia tour of the agricultural modular laboratory
- Integrating internet resources into modular technology- issues and challenges
- Result of a survey of students perceptions and attitude towards modular technology
- Implications for pre and post-service professional development of agricultural educators

Conclusions and Educational Importance

Any business or professional organization that neglects youth development does so at its own perils. This is especially true for post-secondary agricultural education program, which has suffered enrolment attrition in the past few years. In order to reverse this trend, and develop a larger pool of potential enrollees, the profession must play a more active role in developing innovative programs at the secondary level. The modular instructional technology to be presented in this poster is one of such innovative models. In order to maintain its relevance in the info-technology age and attract the best candidates to its programs agricultural education programs must become more innovative.