

# Utilizing the Case-Study Technique in Farm Management

Burton W. DeVeau  
Ohio University

Successful teaching is teaching that results in effective learning. Effective learning involves student participation beyond that of more teacher telling, for teacher telling generally degenerates into memorization of data for test-passing purposes and does not result in the development of basic understanding, skills, and insight. Successful teaching demands that the teacher have an enthusiasm for imparting his ideas, a desire for objectivity, a friendly interest and patient understanding of his students, plus an understanding that education is to be used—that it involves action on the part of both the teacher and the student.

The result of effective learning is the development of understanding or new insight into a situation which may be transferred to or used in many situations. Such a result requires organized learning experiences developed by the teacher. It requires the process of exploration and discovery preceded by an aroused interest and directed purpose.

Many different teaching techniques may be utilized singly or in combination with each other to stimulate effective learning. I wish to describe one technique, the case method, which I have used in a senior farm management class at Ohio University since 1953. Critical evaluation of this technique indicates that it has been quite successful in providing the participants with meaningful learning experiences.

This farm management class has two discussion periods and one three-hour laboratory session each week. The original purpose of the laboratory session was to provide an opportunity for the student to gain experience in making farm management decisions. Although changes have been made in several objectives of this course since 1953, the primary purpose of giving each student the opportunity to make farm management decisions has been maintained. Prior to 1953, this had been done by examining and evaluating enterprises at the university farm. This practice proved to be of questionable value since the same basic situations were repeated year after year. Also, the university farm reflected an abnormal farm management situation rather than a typical farm operation. Therefore, it was decided to utilize farms in the immediate area as *laboratory farms* and to have students develop long range operating plans for these farms. A long range plan consists of a description, analysis, and time-table plan of operation for all of the activities necessary for the management and operation of the farm in order that the farmer may achieve

his goals. The minimum period of time to be included in the plan is five years. The five-year period was selected because it reflects the typical length of crop rotation for the area.

In order to facilitate a thorough development of the long range plans each class is divided into committees of 3 to 5 persons. Each committee is assigned a separate farm and is responsible for developing and preparing the plan of operation for the farm in light of the farmer's long range objectives. The farms to be used are selected according to the following criteria:

1. The farmer must be a cooperator in the local soil and water conservation district. This enables the instructor to enlist the cooperation of the local work unit conservationist in selecting the farm. It also enables the student committee to have immediate access to soil and field layout maps of their assigned farm. It also enables the committee to obtain certain technical advice, if needed.
2. The farmer must not have had a complete farm plan formulated by the work unit conservationist nor by a previous class committee unless he desires to make major changes in his main enterprises. This requirement provides for new case situations for each class.
3. The farmer must be willing to assist and cooperate with the committee assigned to his farm by providing such necessary information as: previous practices, future plans or goals, available financial resources to be devoted to the farm operation, inventories, production records, use of labor resources, and other information as needed.

During the first laboratory session, the students are given careful instructions concerning their activities and responsibilities at their assigned farms. The instructor accompanies the committees during their first few visits to the assigned farms. Then, each committee works with the farmer in developing the long-range plan. The instructor periodically visits each committee at work at its assigned farm and meets with the committees to discuss their pertinent problems. Several classroom discussion periods are devoted to problems peculiar to all committees.

At the end of the semester each committee is expected to submit a written copy of the long-range plan to the instructor and to the cooperating farmer. During the last few laboratory periods the members of each committee describe their long-range plan to the entire class at their assigned farm in the presence of the farmer. The plan is orally evaluated by members of the class.

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reliance and honest competition: and it is an immoral system.

In summary then, as an economist, I contend that the economic act of 1964 will strengthen our economy tremendously. As one interested in our national defense, I contend that the humane and noble principles which are the inspiration of the Act, will strengthen us in the battle against Com-

munist and will play their part in opening the eyes of the Communist nations and the non-committed nations to the beauty of our way of life. As a lover of democracy, I say that this act will strengthen political, social, and economic democracy. As a Christian, I say that it exemplifies the principles of justice and of love which have been given us by God.

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This method of instruction serves to accomplish several objectives:

1. It meets the needs of students by providing them with a challenging opportunity to coordinate their previously acquired knowledge to meet a practical situation—the long-range planning of an existing farm. It gives the student the opportunity to work, share, compare, and evaluate theoretical knowledge, experience and ideas with others—students, technicians, farmer, and instructor. It provides him with an opportunity to develop further his written and oral expression and to cooperate with others.

2. It serves the cooperating farmer by providing him with a well-balanced long-range plan of operation for his farm. It also gives the farmer experience in sharing and evaluating ideas and knowledge with others.

3. It is of value to the instructor by providing him with experiences at the grass-roots level enabling him to keep informed about current practices and problems in the area. It also provides the instructor with the opportunity to evaluate his students in their ability to utilize facts and to coordinate their knowledge into an effective plan.

4. It helps the university through promoting better public relations in the local area.

As a future project, based on the previous twelve years of operation, the instructor intends to have class committees analyze the plans developed for the first farms used, determine whether the plans were followed or not and why, and develop a follow-up long-range plan. During the twelve years this procedure has been followed there has been no difficulty in securing the necessary number of farms and cooperating farmers for each class.

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## NEWS ITEMS

COLUMBIA, MO.—Something new in reading, especially appealing to serious young adults, such as Future Farmers of America and 4-H Club members, is a new book, "Big Men, Big Jobs."

The work, a paperback, brings together the highlights of nearly 80 years of research at the University of Missouri College of Agriculture.

It is composed of 19 stories which, in popular fashion, tell some of the exciting tales of work of College of Agriculture researchers which have had a far-reaching influence on agriculture and in other fields not only in Missouri but also throughout the country.

An example of the contents includes the story of William Albrecht and his part in discovery of the antibiotic, aureomycin, at Sanborn Field on the University of Missouri campus.

This story is described by Wheeler McMillen, editor emeritus of Farm Journal, as "a fine example of the very best in agricultural writing in the past 100 years."

There is also the story about Leonard Haseman and L. F. Childers who found a control for fowlbrood, a disease which had raised havoc in the entire beekeeping industry.

The work of Marcus Zuber in developing corn with extra hard cobs suit-

able for use in the pipe industry is also entertainingly told in the 152 pages of the book.

Told is the part Dr. Ralph Mills, a medical missionary, played in bringing Korean lespedeza to the United States and Dr. W. C. Etheridge's promotion of this crop in Missouri and the mid-west.

The effective and continuous battle of a renowned scientist Ernest R. Sears against wheat rust is the subject of another story, as is the work of several researchers with soybeans.

These and other stories relate some of the important Missouri College of Agriculture milestones which have contributed and are contributing to the well-being of mankind.

"Big Men, Big Jobs" is published by the University of Missouri College of Agriculture. It is believed to be the first such institution to have published a popular paperback.

Copies can be obtained for 50c each by writing to "Big Men, Big Jobs," 198 Agriculture Building, University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo.

The author, Clyde Duncan, has spanned nearly 80 years of College of Agriculture research in "Big Men, Big Jobs," which was under preparation about two years.

Duncan, associate editor at the University of Missouri agricultural editor's office, is well known in the field of farm journalism, and was one of the

early organizers of the newspaper Farm Editor's Association.

Some of this prolific writer's works include "Find a Career in Agriculture," a best seller in the career series published recently by G. P. Putnam's Sons; and "Straight Furrows," the story of 4-H Club work published by University of New Mexico Press in 1954.

Duncan's recent awards include a literary fellowship to Villa Montalvo, Saratoga, Calif., in 1963. Only one is awarded annually. In 1962 he received a Huntington Hartford Foundation writing fellowship.

In 1955 he was presented the 4-H Club's national Alumni Award at the National 4-H Club Congress.

The color cover of "Big Men, Big Jobs" features the portraits of nine outstanding College of Agriculture researchers. It is the work of Ned Etheridge, also an associate editor with the agricultural editor's office at the University of Missouri.

He has been a practicing artist since 1939. He taught art at Christian College in Columbia for six years. He received training in art at Stephens College in Columbia, Kansas City Art Institute and School of Design, and Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan.

His portrait work is particularly well known.