

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND THE 1862 LAND-GRANT INSTITUTIONS: THE REST OF THE STORY

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Abstract

Agricultural Education has had a close working relationship with land-grant universities since they were started in 1862. Many teacher educators refer to the 1862 Act as the Morrill Act. However, others besides Justin Morrill deserve credit for the Act and its passage. There were many false starts along the road to passage of the Act. One of the most fundamental decisions was whether agricultural education teachers should be prepared at land-grant universities or at normal schools. While many agricultural education teacher educators have taught the history of the land-grant act, few have taught the total history because only a few have known it. Jonathan Baldwin Turner of Illinois deserves credit for creating the concept of the land-grant university and advocating its establishment over a 20 year period. After several attempts, including one Presidential veto by James Buchanan, the bill finally became law. One important part of the passage was the Civil War which took several conservative and state rights Senators and Congressmen out of Washington and permitted the Northern legislators to pass the bill. Advocates of normal schools decided they would like to train agricultural education teachers and even got a provision in one of the predecessors to the Smith-Hughes Act to require it. However, land-grant universities had more clout and became the main source of teacher preparation. This decision placed agricultural education teachers administratively closer to agriculturalists than pedagogical specialists.

Since its earliest days, agricultural education has had a close working relationship with 1862 land-grant universities. This relationship even pre-dated the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. The majority of agricultural education teacher training departments have been and still are located at land-grant universities. The same universities also represent an important source of subject matter assistance for agricultural education teachers.

The road to the establishment of land-grant universities was not a smooth one. Bringing about their establishment took several attempts and the influence of a war. Controversy existed over who deserved credit for developing the land-grant concept (Carriel, 1961; James, 1910). Once the 1862 schools were created, the ties to agricultural education were slowly, but steadily established.

These ties involved a federal act to create experiment stations, as well as other federal legislation (Report, 1914).

Many agricultural education teacher educators have taught about the 1862 land-grant act as part of the history of the profession. Unfortunately, they have typically given total credit for the act to just one person, when such an act takes the work of several people. Teacher educators are generally not aware of the struggles that it took to establish the act. They are not cognizant of how agricultural education teachers almost came to be prepared at normal schools instead of land-grant universities (Hearings, 1908). This decision was one which placed agricultural education teachers closer to their agricultural subject matter specialists and not as close to the

pedagogical specialists. Teacher educators need to know the "rest of the story" so all the facts can be shared with the profession.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to examine the people and events that led to the establishment of 1862 land-grant universities and to determine the historical thread of agricultural education ties to such universities. Specific objectives accomplished were to:

1. Determine who deserves credit for creation of 1862 land-grant universities.
2. Examine the controversies surrounding the 1862 act.
3. Determine how 1862 land-grant universities came to play a prominent role in agricultural education.

Methods and Procedures

Historical research methods were utilized to accomplish the objectives of the study. Both primary and secondary sources were utilized to obtain the information needed. Primary sources included mass media publications, Congressional records, texts of both state and federal legislation, and speeches. Secondary sources included books. Information was collected at numerous sites including the Library of Congress, United States Department of Education Library, National Agriculture Library, and various land-grant university libraries. All references were subjected to both internal and external criticism.

Results and/or Findings

Who Deserves the Credit?

Justin Morrill

Many give the credit for passage of the 1862 act to Justin Morrill of Vermont. Certainly, he played a prominent role in its passage and had the political astuteness to be successful in the process. Some refer to it as the Morrill Act. However, someone had to have the initial idea for the concept before such a bill could even be introduced in the United States Congress. Primary credit for that idea belongs to Jonathan Baldwin Turner of Illinois.

Jonathan Turner

In 1851 Jonathan Baldwin Turner gave a speech to the Farmers' Convention at Granville, Illinois, entitled "A Plan for an Industrial University for the State of Illinois." In the speech Turner emphasized that out of 100 workers, society needed 5 in the professional class and 95 in the industrial class. He next bemoaned the fact that higher education educated professionals, but not industrial workers. "But where are the universities, the apparatus, the professors and the literature, specifically adapted to any one of the industrial classes?" (Turner, 1851, p. 2)

Turner continued to suggest that every state should have a university for the industrial class. He suggested a university with a quantity of land varying in soil and aspect, experiments in agriculture and horticulture, and open to all classes of students. He advocated a school-wide curriculum on such topics as anatomy, physiology, instincts and habits of all animals, soils, and bookkeeping. In fact, he suggested that "no species of knowledge should be excluded, practical or theoretical" (Turner, 1851, p. 2).

By the time he gave his speech describing very accurately what was to become the land-grant university, Turner had worked for almost 20 years helping to promote general education in Illinois (Carriell, 1961). His background included farming experience in Massachusetts and teaching at Illinois

College in Jacksonville starting in 1833 (Carriel, 1961).

After Turner's 1851 speech, the Farmers' Convention adopted a resolution calling for an Illinois university for the industrial classes (Carriel, 1961). At Turner's suggestion the Illinois legislature passed a resolution urging Congress to pass a law "... donating to each state in the Union an amount of public lands not less in value than five hundred thousand dollars, for liberal endowment of a system of industrial universities, one in each state of the union . . ." (Carriel, 1961, p. 116)

In a 1910 speech entitled *The Origin of the Land Grant Act of 1862 (The So-called Morrill Act) and Some Account of Its Author Jonathan B. Turner*, Edmund J. James, President of the University of Illinois, emphasized that Turner deserved much more credit than he received for conceiving the idea of the Land-Grant Act and working for its passage. President James made the following points:

There is no desire to detract one iota from the credit due Mr. Morrill for his earnest, wise and persistent advocacy of the policy of Federal aid to education. On the other hand, the credit for having first devised and formulated the original plan and of having worked up the public interest in the measure so that it could be passed belongs clearly to Professor Turner and should be accorded him. (James, 1910, p. 8)

Controversies of the Act

When the bill was first introduced in 1857 by Justin Morrill, it called for the establishment of colleges for the benefit of agriculture and mechanic

arts. The purpose of the 1862 bill was to provide. . . the endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college in each state where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific or other classical studies, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, as the legislatures of the states may respectively prescribe, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life. (Morrill Land-Grant Act, 1862, p. 503)

The 1857 version of the bill provided that states be allocated 20,000 acres of public land for each member of Congress (Cohen, 1974). The final version changed the quota to 30,000 acres (Morrill Land-Grant, 1862). Because many of the eastern states no longer had any public land, the bill called for land script to be issued to those states to finance the purchase of land needed for the college. In the western states there remained large tracts of government owned land that had never been homesteaded. An eastern state that had no available, suitable land would be issued script for western state land. The eastern state would then sell the western land and use the money to finance the purchase of land for the new college. This provision of the bill caused considerable opposition. Some lawmakers believed that the issuance of land script would open the door to the land speculators who would take advantage of the procedure to reap huge profits.

However, the greatest opposition came from Southern legislators. In the 1850s the raging debate in government was over the power of the federal government versus the power of the states. Because the constitution made no provision for any type of nationally funded education, Southerners considered the bill to be not only unconstitutional, but another means by which proponents of a strong central government could seize more power. Senator Clay of Alabama argued before the Senate:

It will unlimit all the limitations of the powers of Congress; will efface all the lines that define the boundaries between Federal and States rights; confound all the separate and distinct duties of State governments and will be a long step towards the overthrow of this truly Federal and the establishment of a really national government. (Congressional Globe, 1859, p. 852)

In spite of vigorous opposition to the measure, many Congressmen favored the bill. Legislation aimed at improving both agriculture and education drew great support. In February of 1859 the bill passed both houses of Congress and was sent to President Buchanan for his signature. Buchanan described the bill as both inexpedient and unconstitutional and vetoed it for reasons which ranged from costing too much to being unconstitutional (Rasmussen, 1975).

By 1862 the United States had a new President and a new Congress, following secession of the Southern states to form the Confederate States of America. With those changes and the extreme pro states-rights, Southern Congressmen no longer voting against it, Congress was able to pass the land-grant legislation, and it was signed into law by President Lincoln on July 2.

Prominent Role in Agricultural Education

The development of Congressional District Agricultural Schools in Alabama, Georgia, Virginia, and Arkansas provided instruction in agricultural education and home economics, as well as teacher training for both fields. The newfound popularity of agricultural education with several thousand students enrolled in the early 1900s created a need to prepare agricultural education teachers. Crosby noted in 1905 that of the 182 normal schools in the United States, 64 taught agriculture. He further indicated that...“in 11 of the normal schools,

agriculture is taught by teachers of agriculture, in 11 by teachers of science and agriculture, in 35 by those designated teachers of science, and in the remaining 7 by other teachers--principals, teachers of pedagogy, economics, etc” (Crosby, 1905, p. 212).

Other people were beginning to believe that agricultural education teachers should be prepared at land-grant universities. For example, the Nelson Amendment was approved March 4, 1907, as an amendment to the Agricultural Appropriations Bill (Nelson Amendment, 1907). It permitted federal funds to be used by colleges of agriculture to provide courses for the preparation of instructors to teach the elements of agriculture and mechanics arts. In 1908, \$25,000 was appropriated annually to each state for this purpose (Nelson Amendment, 1907; Wheeler, 1948). Stimson (1913) predicted that seven years after passage of the Nelson Amendment, 60 or more professors of agricultural education, charged with the duty of training teachers of agriculture, should be in position.

Push for Normal Schools

By 1908 a major push was made to have normal schools train agricultural education teachers. As testimony will indicate, this push was apparently done as much because of jealousy as logic. The Bill to Provide for the Advancement of Instruction in Agriculture, Manual Training and Home Economics in the State Normal Schools of the United States was introduced by Senator Burkett of Nebraska. While the bill was not passed by Congress, normal schools did receive a lot of attention as a possible source of agricultural education teachers. In a statement on the Burkett Bill before the Senate Agriculture and Forestry Committee, Homer H. Seerley, President of the State Normal School of Iowa located at Cedar Rapids, made a point and a dig at land-grant universities.

We have hoped that the National Government would do for the normal schools in small measure what they have attempted to do for other institutions of learning, like the mechanics arts colleges and the agricultural colleges, in order that we may carry this encouragement and this instruction to the country schools; and by means of the normal schools we feel that this problem can be very much better solved than by any other agency with which we are acquainted. (Hearings, 1908, p. 3)

That same year the federal bill for vocational education showed the influence of such thinking and lobbying. The Dolliver-Davis Bill (a predecessor to the Smith-Hughes Act), had a provision for the training of vocational teachers, including agricultural education teachers, to be conducted at normal schools. The same provision was repeated in the 1910 version of the vocational bill (Swanson, 1962).

However, in a concession to the political muscle of land-grant universities in an agrarian society, by 1911 the federal legislation had evolved to the point of showing preference for land-grant universities. The Page-Wilson bill preface stated: "To cooperate with the States in encouraging instruction in agriculture, the trades and industries, and home economics in secondary schools; in preparing teachers for these vocational courses in State colleges of agriculture and the mechanic arts . . ." (Senate Bill S 3, 1911, p. 1). The 1917 Smith-Hughes Act called for the preparation of vocational teachers; however, it did not specify at what institutions.

The place of the normal school for the preparation of agricultural education teachers became one of emphasizing the preparation of elementary teachers. Actually, the normal schools got what was left after the preparation of secondary

teachers went to land-grant universities. A. C. True, director of the Office of Experiment Stations for USDA, agreed with this point of view (Report, 1914). True was especially supportive of federal aid for agricultural education after he was assured such programs would not have experiment stations, such as the Congressional district schools, and that cooperative extension would operate separately from vocational education at land-grant universities. A. B. Graham, in charge of College Extension Work at The Ohio State University, also agreed that land-grant universities such as Ohio State were not in the business of training elementary agriculture teachers (Hearings, 1908).

With the change of influence that had occurred from normal schools to land-grant universities, it was logical that agricultural education teacher educators would reach the status of their counterpart agricultural subject matter faculty. This status generally meant departmental establishment in land-grant colleges of agriculture.

Conclusions

Land-grant universities were born during perhaps the greatest crisis the United States ever faced. The Civil War created great tragedy, but such a crisis also generated creative solutions to the problems faced by the country. With the secession on the part of Southern states and their Congressmen no longer voting, the 1862 act was passed. This legislative accomplishment is held in common with vocational legislation that started federal support for agricultural education. The most significant legislation seemed to have come about during crisis situations such as a war or a depression. An example is the Smith-Hughes Act passed during World War I.

Many people helped to establish the land-grant system. Two such individuals stand above the others. Jonathan Baldwin Turner had the creative genius to come up with the idea and concept of

land-grant colleges. Justin Morrill had the political expertise to introduce and guide through Congress the enabling legislation. Both deserve a great deal of credit. In fact, the land-grant story is such a successful one that there is plenty of credit to go around.

Despite concerns over states' rights, the land-grant bill was passed and became the law for the entire country. This great success has shown the value of federal leadership and the advantage of having uniform laws and finances creating an entire higher education system. Today, even the greatest of states' rights proponents would be hesitant to give up their state's land-grant university.

Implications

One could speculate that if land-grant universities had not been established, then agricultural education teachers would have been trained at normal schools. With a degree of political clout and a degree of logic, the early leaders decided that agricultural education teachers should be trained at the land-grant institutions. The fundamental decision was one of placing agricultural education teachers closer to their agricultural subject matter specialists and not so close to the pedagogical specialists.

The entire agricultural education program has been influenced by this decision. It has caused closer ties to the other parts of the land-grant university. The agricultural education teacher has traditionally felt a kinship for agricultural experiment station research and the cooperative extension system.

With appropriate background, agricultural education teacher educators can teach about Jonathan Baldwin Turner as well as Justin Morrill. Teacher educators can teach about why land-grant prepared teachers feel the kinship they do with other agriculturalists prepared by the same institution.

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