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Determining why agricultural educators are leaving the profession and how to increase the retention rate

Jay Solomonson
Iowa State University

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**Determining why agricultural educators are leaving the profession and how to increase
the retention rate**

by

Jay Solomonson

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Agricultural Education

Program of Study Committee:
Michael Retallick, Major Professor
Patricia Carlson
Mark Hainline
Wade Miller
Scott Smalley

The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this dissertation. The Graduate College will ensure this dissertation is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2017

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. Without the support, understanding, patience, and love of my wife, Sheryl, and my two amazing children, Adalyn and Weston, this dissertation would not have been possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES	v
LIST OF TABLES	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	viii
ABSTRACT	x
CHAPTER I GENERAL INTRODUCTION	1
Background and Setting	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Purpose and Objectives of the Study	3
Need for the Study	4
Dissertation Organization	5
Limitations and Assumptions	6
Definition of Terms	7
References	9
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW	13
Introduction	13
Conceptual Framework	14
Factors Influencing Teacher Retention or Attrition	16
Teacher Development Factors	16
Compensation	19
Personal Factors	21
Working Conditions	26
Professional Teacher Life Cycles	31
Summary	34
References	36
CHAPTER III OVER THE EDGE: FACTORS NUDGING MID-CAREER AGRICULTURAL EDUCATORS OUT OF THE PROFESSION	43
Introduction	43
Theoretical Framework & Literature Review	46
Purpose and Objectives	49
Methodology	50
Findings	54
Conclusions, Implications, & Recommendations	64
References	69

CHAPTER IV	FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ILLINOIS AGRICULTURAL EDUCATORS' FINAL DECISION TO LEAVE THE CLASSROOM	74
	Introduction	74
	Conceptual Framework & Literature Review.....	75
	Purpose and Objectives	82
	Methods	83
	Results	85
	Conclusions, Implications, & Recommendations	94
	References	99
CHAPTER V	RETAINING AGRICULTURAL EDUCATORS IN ILLINOIS ..	106
	Introduction	106
	Literature Review.....	108
	Theoretical/Conceptual Framework.....	110
	Purpose and Objectives.....	111
	Methodology.....	111
	Findings	115
	Discussion, Implications, & Recommendations	126
	References	131
CHAPTER VI	GENERAL CONCLUSIONS.....	135
	Conclusions and Implications.....	135
	Recommendations	141
	Recommendations for the Profession	141
	Recommendations for Teacher Preparation Programs	142
	Recommendations for Professional Development	143
	Recommendations for Future Research	143
	References	145
APPENDIX A.	INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DOCUMENTATION.....	147
APPENDIX B.	SURVEY INSTRUMENTS, CONSENT DOCUMENTS, & CORESPONDENCE.	154
APPENDIX C.	PERMISSION TO USE BRAYFIELD-ROTHER JOB SATISFACTION SCALE.	181
APPENDIX D.	PERMISSION TO USE CHAPMAN'S MODEL OF THE INFLUENCES ON TEACHER RETENTION.	182

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
CHAPTER II	
Figure 1 Conceptual Model of Factors Influencing Agricultural Education Teacher Retention or Attrition	15
CHAPTER IV	
Figure 1 Conceptual Model of Factors Influencing Agricultural Education Teacher Retention or Attrition	76
CHAPTER V	
Figure 1 A Suggested Model of the Influences Associated with Teacher Attrition.	110

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
CHAPTER II	
Table 1 Professional Agriculture Teacher Life Cycle Stages	33
CHAPTER III	
Table 1 Professional Agriculture Teacher Life Cycle Stages	49
Table 2 Selected Personal and Professional Characteristics of Mid-Career Agricultural Educators Participating in the 2016 XLR8 Conference	54
Table 3 Overall Job Satisfaction of Mid-Career Agricultural Educators.....	55
Table 4 Levels of Job Satisfaction with Specific Facets of the Job Between Those Contemplating Leaving and Those Who Are Not.....	56
CHAPTER IV	
Table 1 Selected Personal and Professional Characteristics of Former Illinois Agricultural Educators 2007-2017.....	86
Table 2 Agricultural Teacher Attrition Constructs of Influence and Their Impact on Illinois Agricultural Educators' Final Decision to Leave the Secondary Agricultural Education Profession	87
Table 3 Top Ten Specific Variables Which Impact Illinois Agricultural Educators' Final Decision to Leave the Secondary Agricultural Education Profession	88
Table 4 Top Ten Behaviors, Attitudes, or Feelings Felt the Final Year in the Profession.....	89
Table 5 Pearson Correlation Coefficients of Selected Personal and Professional Characteristics and the Four Constructs of Influence	90
Table 6 Agricultural Teacher Attrition Constructs of Influence and Differences Between Professional Career Stages.....	91
Table 7 Significant Agricultural Educator Attrition Influences (by Construct) and Differences Between Professional Career Stages	92

Table 8 Multiple Linear Regression Determining Predictors for a Teachers' Determination if Leaving the Profession was the Right Decision..... 93

CHAPTER V

Table 1 Demographic Summary of Study Participants..... 113

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ABSTRACT

The field of agricultural education has experienced a consistent labor shortage the past several decades. Consequently, many school districts struggle to fill their open positions, while others are forced to shut down their agricultural programs completely due to inadequate staffing. Research indicates teacher attrition as a predominant factor behind the teacher shortage. The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to determine why agricultural educators are leaving the profession and identify potential action steps to alleviate the problem. Specific objectives included: (1) identify factors influencing current agricultural educators' decision to leave or stay in the profession; (2) determine factors associated with former agricultural educators' final decision to leave the profession; and (3) identify factors that would influence an agricultural educator to stay in, and a former agricultural educator to return to, the profession.

Researchers developed and administered questionnaires, as well as conducted interviews, to gather data from agricultural educators currently in the profession and with those who have already left the profession for alternative employment. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the quantitative component of the study. Open-coding was utilized to reveal concepts and develop themes for the qualitative component of the study.

Results indicate agricultural educators are satisfied with their careers and significant differences did not exist between those contemplating leaving and those who were not. However, differences existed between groups in areas related to recognition and school policy and administration. Furthermore, the data revealed mid-career agricultural educators

experience similar frustrations as teachers in other professional life stages; however, they seem to struggle more with balancing their personal and professional lives due to changing family dynamics. Researchers discovered personal factors were the leading contributor to all former teachers' decision to leave the profession. Interestingly, compensation was deemed the lowest contributor. Moreover, significant differences were identified between novice and experienced teachers in several areas. Unrealized expectations and the belief of being an excellent agricultural educator and having a satisfying personal life are incompatible, surfaced as underlying factors as to why a teacher leaves the profession. To increase retention rates, the profession must provide teachers additional support in addition to creating a philosophical shift towards a more sustainable model which is mindful of out-of-classroom expectations.

CHAPTER I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Background and Setting

The educational system in the United States is facing an ongoing challenge of keeping teachers in the profession. It is estimated around half a million teachers move or leave the profession every year (Haynes, 2014). Furthermore, research indicates more than 41% of all educators will leave teaching within their first five years (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). This is a huge problem financially, as it costs the United States up to \$2.2 billion annually in attrition costs (Haynes, 2014).

In addition to the continuous financial burden, it also negatively affects students in those schools as many of those leaving the profession are quality teachers. Researchers report good teachers are the most significant reason for students achieving success during their formal education (Alegreto, Cororan, & Mishel, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Sanders & Rivers, 1998; Stronge, 2007). When these teachers leave, it negatively affects student achievement (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2012). It is for these reasons it is essential good educators are kept in the teaching profession.

The field of agricultural education is of particular concern, as there currently is a national shortage of highly qualified teachers. In 2017, the National Agricultural Education Supply and Demand Study reported there were 1,476 openings in 2016, but only 772 licensed-eligible program completers to fill these positions (Smith, Lawver, & Foster, 2017). Furthermore, Smith et al. (2017) reported over a quarter of the graduates (26.2%) finishing an approved agriculture teacher preparation program, did not even go on to teach school-

based agricultural education (SBAE). The report also indicated 721 agricultural educators who taught during the 2015-2016 school year decided to leave the profession altogether. Of those teachers, 72% reported leaving for reasons other than retirement (Smith et al., 2017) suggesting an attrition problem which desperately needs to be addressed. Darling-Hammond exposed the fact the United States is experiencing the first major teacher shortage since the 1990s (Camera, 2016) and the high attrition rate is the “driving factor” behind the shortage (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016, p. 38).

These alarming statistics suggest we are on the cusp of a major pandemic within the agricultural education profession. If we do not develop a comprehensive plan to address the teacher shortage soon, the quantity and quality of school-based agricultural education programs around the nation could be at risk.

Statement of the Problem

The field of agricultural education has experienced a consistent labor shortage the past several decades (Camp, Broyles, & Skelton, 2002; Kantrovich, 2010; Smith et al., 2017). Consequently, many school districts are choosing to fill their agricultural education positions with candidates not fully-certified to teach, or are shutting down their programs completely (Smith et al., 2017). Sutcher et al. (2016) indicate the primary problem is not necessarily derived from the decline of those enrolled in teacher preparation programs but through high teacher attrition. The researchers suggest, “Reducing attrition would actually make a greater difference in balancing supply and demand than any other intervention” (Sutcher et al., p. 37).

To help solve this issue, we must first understand why agricultural educators are leaving the profession. Researchers have determined agricultural educators are generally satisfied with their careers (Blackburn, Bunch, & Haynes, 2017; Blackburn & Robinson, 2008; Cano & Miller, 1992; Castillo & Cano, 1999; Chenevey, Ewing, & Whittington, 2008; Gilman, Peake, & Parr, 2012; Kitchel, Smith, Henry, Robinson, Lawver, Park, & Schell, 2012; Sorensen & McKim, 2014; Sorensen, McKim, & Velez, 2016; Walker, Garton, & Kitchel, 2004). However, they ultimately chose to leave the profession for one or more specific reasons related to poor working conditions, inadequate compensation, employment factors, or personal/family reasons (Tippens, Ricketts, Morgan, Navarro, & Flanders, 2013).

Researchers have already determined several reasons agricultural educators choose to leave and others as to why they remain in the profession. Many of these studies investigated the perceptions of teachers still in the profession. A limited number of studies have examined populations of teachers who are either currently contemplating leaving teaching, or those who have already left the profession to pursue alternative employment. Even fewer studies focused on professional life stages of an agricultural educator's career and reasons for them departing. Additionally, there are no studies providing insight by departed teachers on what can be done as a profession to resolve the teacher attrition problem.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The primary purpose of this mixed-methods study was to determine why agricultural educators are leaving the profession and identifying potential action steps to alleviate the problem. The study will attempt to examine factors at various stages (novice, mid-career, and

late-career) of the teachers' professional life cycle (Huberman, 1989). Specific objectives of this study include:

1. Identify factors influencing current agricultural educators' decision to leave or stay in the teaching profession.
2. Determine factors associated with former agricultural educators' final decision to leave the profession.
3. Identify factors that would influence an agricultural educator to stay in, and a former agricultural educator to return to, the profession.

Need for the Study

The need for this study stems from the American Association for Agricultural Education's (AAAE) National Research Agenda and addresses Research Priority 3 as, "Sufficient Scientific and Professional Workforce that Addresses the Challenges of the 21st Century" (Roberts, Harder, & Brashears, 2016). The demand for qualified, highly-skilled graduates within the agricultural industry continues to rise, and our colleges and universities are not producing enough graduates to fill the current vacancies (Goecker, Smith, Fernandez, Ali, & Theller, 2015). This trend is also apparent within the field of agricultural education as recent supply and demand studies have indicated (Kantrovich, 2010; Smith et al., 2017).

Specifically, this study addresses the following research question which falls within this priority, "What methods, models, and practices are effective in recruiting agricultural leadership, education, and communication practitioners and supporting their success at all stages of their careers?" (Stripling & Ricketts, 2016, p. 31). This suggested inquiry indicates

an opportunity for social scientists within agricultural education to research methods and best practices to not only recruit, but effectively retain agricultural educators to help meet this constant labor need.

Dissertation Organization

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. Chapter one provides a general introduction to the dissertation. It includes the background and setting, the problem statement, the research purpose and objectives, the need for the study, the dissertations limitations and assumptions, and definitions of specific terminology related to the topic. Chapter two introduces the conceptual framework utilized within the dissertation and provides an extensive review of the existing literature related to the teacher attrition phenomenon. Addressing the first research objective of the dissertation, chapter three is a research article examining factors related to job satisfaction and potential attrition/retention factors as reported by mid-career agricultural educators still working in the profession. Chapter four is a research article focusing on determining factors related to attrition by Illinois Agricultural Educators who have left the profession spanning the past 10 years. This journal article will focus on the second research objective. Examining the third and final research objective, the fifth chapter is a qualitative paper identifying factors that would potentially influence former agricultural educators to return to the profession or encourage current teachers to stay. Chapter six includes the general conclusions and recommendations of the dissertation.

Limitations and Assumptions

This study has several limitations. First, the study was limited by purposive sampling techniques. The participants selected for each population were provided by external groups. For the first journal article (Chapter 3) the population was limited to the participants of the 2016 National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) XLR8 program. This program is designed for mid-career agricultural educators and participants are chosen through an application process by NAAE.

For the second and third journal articles (Chapters 4 and 5), the population included all former Illinois Agricultural Educators who have left the profession within the past 10 years. Contact information was provided by the Facilitating Coordination in Agricultural Education (FCAE) and the Illinois Association of Vocational Agriculture Teachers (IAVAT) online directory, but accuracy of information provided was limited by former teachers that could be contacted.

Due to the second and third research articles existing as a collaborative effort with another educational institution, the study was limited by the constraints of their approved Institutional Review Board (IRB) paperwork and previously developed survey instrument.

Finally, the study was limited due to the use of self-reported data. Since a significant portion of the research conducted was qualitative, it is important to acknowledge these types of data can be difficult to independently verify and may contain unintentional biases from the participants. Due to these concerns, caution must be taken when generalizing the results beyond our two groups and suggesting the findings be applicable nationwide.

There were also certain assumptions made concerning this study. First and foremost was that participants answered truthfully during both the interview process and while

completing the survey instruments. The researchers are assuming the participants' responses accurately reflect their perceptions towards factors related to agricultural teacher attrition. It was also assumed all participants receiving the survey instrument for the second and third research articles had voluntarily left the profession and were not forced to leave in any way.

Definition of Terms

Burnout- A psychological condition depicted by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and loss of sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981)

Illinois Association of Vocational Agriculture Teachers (IAVAT)- A professional organization for agricultural educators, within the state of Illinois, which provides members an opportunity for leadership, professionalism, advocacy, and integration with other agencies supportive of agricultural education efforts (Illinois Association of Vocational Agriculture Teachers, 2017)

Facilitating Coordination in Agricultural Education (FCAE)- A state-funded project, through the Illinois State Board of Education, whose goal is to provide “program development services essential to the implementation of a comprehensive statewide plan for the improvement of agricultural education at all levels, pre-kindergarten through adult” (Illinois Agricultural Education, 2017, para. 2)

National Association of Agricultural educators (NAAE)- A national professional organization for those involved in school-based agricultural education at all levels. Their mission is to advocate for agricultural education, provide professional development, and work to recruit and retain teachers to the profession (National Association of Agricultural Educators, 2017)

National FFA Organization (formally Future Farmers of America)- An intracurricular student organization for students interested in agriculture and leadership development within school-based agricultural education (National FFA Organization, 2017a)

School-based agricultural education (SBAE)- Systemic instruction in agriculture, food, and natural resources within a formal educational setting including elementary, middle school, and secondary levels (Phillips, Osborne, Dyer, & Ball, 2008)

Self-Efficacy- Beliefs in one's perceived ability to influence life events and control how those experiences influence their lives (Bandura, 1994)

Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE)- The experiential learning component of the total school-based agricultural education program intended for students to apply classroom content through a work-based project as they develop technical and workplace skills, which prepare them for opportunities beyond high school (National FFA Organization, 2017b)

Teacher Attrition- Educators who have left the teaching profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003)

Teacher Retention- Educators who remain in the teaching profession from year to year (Jacob, Vidyarthi, & Carroll, 2012)

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CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Kantrovich (2010) concluded the teacher shortage in school-based agricultural education (SBAE) problem is not necessarily a new phenomenon and has been present for at least the last four decades. Camp, Broyles, and Skelton (2002) reported historically there has been a supply deficit of agricultural educators as far back as the mid-1960's. Several studies conducted over the last 40 years have focused on agricultural educator shortage and retention/attrition issues. For the literature review, the emphasis will be on contemporary research and include only studies within the past two decades.

Previously conducted teacher retention and attrition research has attempted to identify problems agricultural educators encounter, which contribute to the various reasons one might leave the profession (i.e., attrition). As the literature review revealed, these problems include stress, burnout, family or personal reasons, a low degree of self-efficacy, inadequate compensation, student motivation and behavior, heavy workload, poor working conditions, and lack of time-management skills, among others.

Recently, research has focused on career commitment and why agricultural educators choose to remain in the classroom (i.e., retention). The top reasons cited within the literature as to why agricultural educators stay in the profession include possessing a high initial commitment to the profession, receiving generous levels of support from home and work, working in a positive school environment, having highly motivated students, receiving adequate compensation, and having a high level of autonomy.

This chapter will examine these previous studies relating to teacher retention/attrition, and in combination with the following conceptual framework, provide a foundation for this dissertation's purpose and objectives. Furthermore, as we are investigating these factors within various career stages, a section exploring the literature related to the professional life cycles of teachers will be included. The chapter will conclude with a summary of these elements.

Conceptual Framework

In 2013, Tippens, Ricketts, Morgan, Navarro, and Flanders introduced a conceptual model of primary causes of teacher attrition in agricultural education to guide research within this area. The model was constructed utilizing Grissmer and Kirby's (1987) Human Capital Theory and Ingersoll's (2003) work with teacher attrition (Tippens et al., 2013). Tippens et al. (2013) suggested agricultural teacher retention or attrition is a determination of overall job satisfaction, which is a result of four categories of variables: (1) employment factors, (2) working conditions, (3) family and personal factors, and (4) compensation.

An adaptation of Tippens et al. (2013) model, which more broadly defines each of the different variables, was developed to conceptually frame this study. Moreover, due to the current literature consistently reporting agricultural educators are generally satisfied with their careers (Blackburn, Bunch, & Haynes, 2017; Blackburn & Robinson, 2008; Cano & Miller, 1992; Castillo & Cano, 1999; Chenevey, Ewing, & Whittington, 2008; Gilman, Peake, & Parr, 2012; Kitchel et al., 2012; Sorensen & McKim, 2014; Sorensen, McKim, & Velez, 2016a; Walker, Garton, & Kitchel, 2004), the overarching job satisfaction variable was eliminated from the revised model. Walker et al. (2004) shared that when referring to the job responsibilities of the agricultural educator, similar levels of overall job satisfaction exist

amongst those who stay in, and those who leave, the agricultural teaching profession. Using this evidence, the modified model suggests one or more of the specific job satisfaction variables, within the proposed constructs, can directly impact teacher retention/attrition without being attributed to overall job satisfaction. The four revised constructs identified within the adapted model, which will provide the framework for this study, include: teacher development, compensation, personal factors, and working conditions (Figure 1).

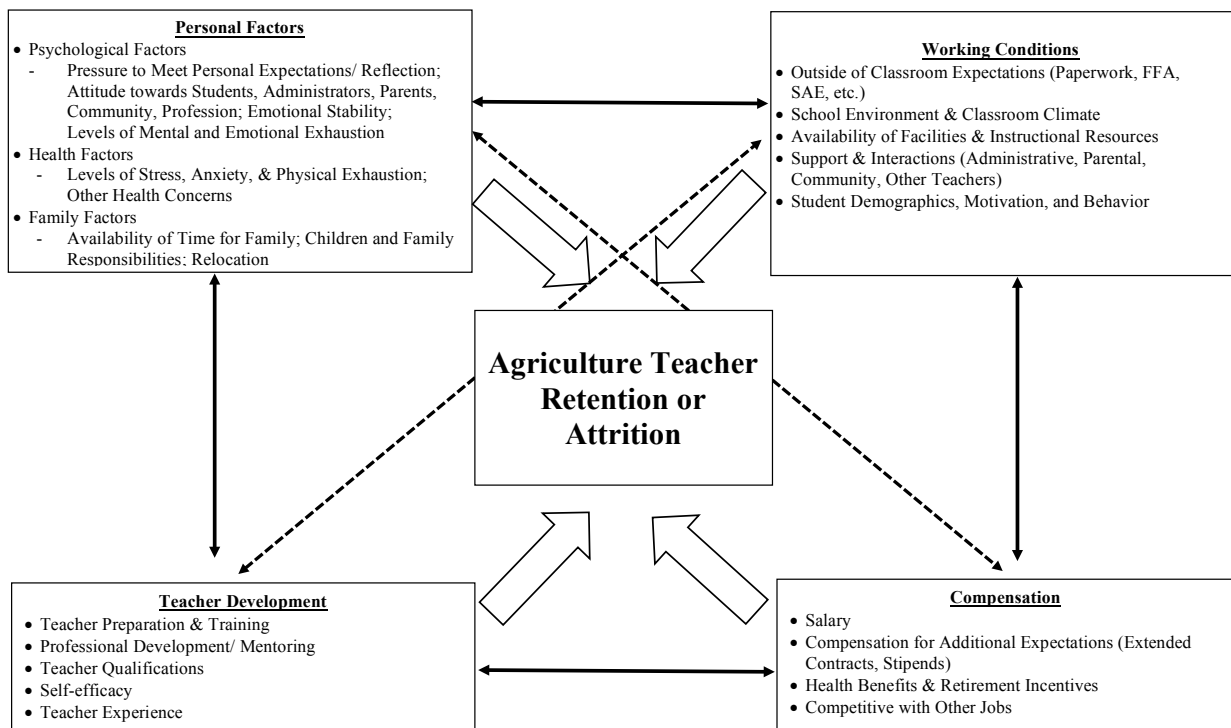


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Factors Influencing Agricultural Education Teacher Retention or Attrition. Adapted from Tippens et al. (2013)

Many of the studies within the literature review have incorporated a combination of these constructs and have attempted to examine the relationships between them in order to shed light on the teacher retention/attrition problem. The following review of literature will

provide a synthesis of this previous research investigating both general education teacher attrition and agricultural education teacher attrition.

Factors Influencing Teacher Retention or Attrition

Teacher Development Factors

Teacher preparation and training, qualifications, professional development, mentoring, self-efficacy, and teacher experience comprise the teacher development construct of the conceptual framework. Research shows sufficient teacher preparation and training, purposeful professional development and induction activities, possessing moderate to high levels of self-efficacy, and increased experiences in the classroom can all contribute to increased teacher retention. This section will begin by reviewing the general education literature within this area, then narrowing the focus to examine studies conducted within agricultural education.

Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2014) reported novice teachers, which have acquired ample training in teaching methods and pedagogy, are more likely to remain in the profession than those with less coursework and training. Similar studies also suggest educators are less likely to leave the profession when adequately prepared for their career (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002).

Furthermore, sufficient professional development and induction/mentoring programs have shown to have a positive impact on retaining teachers within the profession (Haynes, 2014; Ingersoll, 2003; Krasnoff, 2014). Ingersoll (2003) proclaimed first-year teachers who fully engage in a mentoring and induction program are 22% less likely to leave the

profession than those receiving no induction or mentoring. However, it should be noted the mentoring program should be well-developed and purposeful to obtain effective results.

A teacher's level of preparedness and self-efficacy has also been shown to be strongly correlated with their intention to remain in the profession (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002). The evidence indicates a teacher's level of career commitment is associated with their level of self-efficacy. Moreover, the literature reveals the likelihood of a teacher leaving the profession drops off significantly beyond year five (Allen, 2005), suggesting teacher retention can be attributed, in part, by additional years of teaching experience.

Within the realm of agricultural education, little literature has been produced examining how teacher preparation programs, experience, and qualifications influence teacher attrition in school-based agricultural education (SBAE). Warnick, Thompson, and Tarpley (2010) conducted a study reviewing personal and professional characteristics of second-year agricultural educators (i.e., age, education, experiences, etc.) and sought to determine if there was a relationship between those variables and the likelihood to remain in the profession. The researchers found no significant relationship between personal and professional demographics and the perceived likelihood to remain teaching. However, compensation for additional responsibilities was reported to be a significant factor for the respondents. When comparing teacher qualifications, Robinson and Edwards (2012) reported traditionally certified teachers are far more likely to remain in the profession than those receiving an alternative type of certification.

Fewer studies have been conducted investigating professional development and mentoring programs and their effect on agricultural teacher attrition. Nevertheless, Touchstone (2015) suggested agricultural educator retention rates could be improved by

identifying problems agricultural educators confront and designing professional development and mentoring activities based on those needs. Peiter, Terry, and Cartmell (2005) affirmed several benefits of first-year agricultural educators participating in a mentoring program including various types of assistance to the novice teacher. Even though little evidence exists for the ability of professional development and mentoring to improve agricultural educator retention, there is a consensus in the literature suggesting professional development needs of agricultural educators vary immensely, so a continuous needs assessment is recommended to determine the training they require (Joerger, 2002; Myers, Dyer, & Washburn, 2005).

A teacher development area that has been well-documented in the agricultural education literature would be the determination of self-efficacy and its relationship to job satisfaction and the decision to remain in the profession. Blackburn and Robison (2008) reported a high, positive correlation between job satisfaction and an agricultural educator's perceived level of self-efficacy. Swan, Wolf, and Cano (2011) indicated this is particularly true for novice agricultural educators.

Knobloch and Whittington (2003) pioneered this area of research by examining differences between teacher efficacy and career commitment of novice agricultural educators in Ohio. The researchers concluded beginning teachers, with a higher level of career commitment, will also possess a higher level of self-efficacy. McKim and Valez (2015) conducted a similar study but indicated only minimal differences in levels of self-efficacy and career commitment between teachers with 1-5 years of teaching experience. However, they did discover classroom management and science teaching efficacy were significant predictors of a novice teacher to remain in the classroom. Several other studies have determined career commitment can be a strong predictor of teacher retention (Crutchfield,

Ritz, & Burris, 2013; Sorensen & McKim, 2014).

Wolf (2011) contributed to the self-efficacy research by determining perceived levels of self-efficacy of beginning agricultural educators. Interestingly, almost all of the teachers participating in the study planned to remain in the classroom for the foreseeable future. Moreover, they reported having an excellent student teaching experience and first year of teaching. The researchers suggested these two experiences contribute to teacher retention. Haynes (2014) confirmed this by indicating, “Retention is closely related to the quality of the first teaching experience” (p. 6).

Recently, Blackburn et al. (2017) expanded the literature base on self-efficacy by conducting a study to determine if a relationship existed between an agricultural educators’ level of self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and the perception of a work-life balance. Results indicated their sample of agricultural educators were efficacious, satisfied with their career, and had the perceived ability to achieve a work-life balance. They also found a strong, positive relationship between levels of job satisfaction and self-efficacy.

Compensation

According to the literature, compensation is a factor closely associated with a teacher’s decision to leave the profession. Compensation encompasses earning a fair salary, being compensated for additional responsibilities, and receiving adequate benefits (e.g., healthcare, retirement, etc.). The compensation also needs to be competitive with other jobs requiring similar educational credentials, and those in a comparable geographic area. Allen (2005) confirmed most current educational research supports the notion that increased

compensation would assist in retaining quality teachers. This is also evident in the agricultural education literature.

The education literature suggests individuals are more likely to enter the profession when starting salaries are competitive with other careers (Loeb & Beteillie, 2009). Furthermore, Gray and Taie (2015) reported when a teacher's starting salary is \$40,000/year or higher, attrition rates are 10% lower after the first year and 9% lower after five years, respectively. However, according to the National Education Association (NEA), the national average starting teacher salary, during the 2012-2013 school year, was only \$36,141 (National Education Association, 2017).

When examining all teachers, The National Center for Education Statistics reported the average salary of a full-time public school teacher was \$56,383 during the 2012-2013 school year (Snyder & Dillow, 2015). Allegretto, Corcoran, and Mishel (2008) indicated the average teacher's salary is approximately 75% of what other college graduates with similar educational credentials are earning. Consequently, Ingersoll and Smith (2003) denoted close to 78% of teachers leave the profession because they are dissatisfied with their salary. However, Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas (2016) reported approximately 70% of former teachers have considered returning to the profession might do so if they had a higher salary and the ability to maintain their retirement benefits. Furthermore, Johnson and Birkeland (2003) informed that compensation undeniably contributes to the decision to leave the profession, but interestingly, is only secondary to poor working conditions.

Within the agricultural education literature, there has been no contemporary research exclusively focusing on the relationship between compensation and the teacher attrition problem. However, compensation has emerged as a significant factor in several studies

related to job satisfaction, problems teachers encounter, and reasons teachers leave the profession.

Boone and Boone (2009) discovered receiving inadequate compensation is a significant problem faced by agricultural educators. Bennett, Iverson, Rohs, Langone, and Edwards (2002) expanded the literature base in this area by suggesting an agriculture teacher's job satisfaction could increase if offered additional compensation through an extended contract. Warnick et al. (2010) suggested that compensation is a significant factor for a beginning teacher and their decision to remain in the profession.

In the Lemons, Brashears, Burris, Meyers, and Price (2015) study on factors related to attrition, a sub-theme that emerged was the lack of adequate compensation for the amount of work one puts into being an agriculture educator. Several of the participants in the study indicated it was ultimately money and compensation that were the pivotal reason as to why they left the profession. However, the literature around compensation is inconclusive as several other studies report other attrition factors, including personal factors and working conditions, as more important than compensation.

Personal Factors

Ingersoll and Smith (2003) reported 42% of former teachers cite personal factors as a reason they left the profession. According to the conceptual framework, personal factors that could contribute to the decision to stay in or leave the profession included: family influences, health factors, and psychological reasons. This section will examine the literature related to these factors including common problems and stressors of teachers, factors related to teacher burnout, and how the lack of a work-life balance contributes to the attrition problem. Since

these factors are closely related to working conditions, overlap may exist between these two constructs.

Lambert, O'Donnell, Kusherman, and McCarthy (2006) characterized the teaching profession as “emotionally taxing and potentially frustrating” (p. 105). Consequently, it is reasonable to believe many educators experience high levels of stress that could take a toll on themselves and their family. Extensive research has been conducted confirming teaching as a stressful career, which can lead to physical, emotional, and psychological burnout (McCarthy, Lambert, O'Donnell, & Melendres, 2009).

Burke, Greenglass, and Schwarzer (1996) indicated teachers experience a great deal of stress throughout their careers, which ultimately leads to burnout and potential health problems. They suggested the following variables may predict teacher burnout: excessive amounts of red tape (including paperwork), disruptive students, self-doubt, lack of administrative support, and their family situation. Moreover, family influences have also shown to largely impact a teacher's decision to stay in or leave the profession. Farkas, Johnson, and Foleno (2000) reported 81% of teachers indicate their job must allow adequate time for family obligations. However, often due to the extreme workload many teachers encounter, their family time suffers.

Within the agricultural education literature, several studies have investigated problems specific to agricultural educators and common stressors they experience throughout their career. According to the literature, the common struggles of agricultural educators include dealing with administration, building support for the program, paperwork, classroom management, student motivation and discipline, inadequate compensation, balancing a personal and professional life, inadequate facilities and equipment, managing the FFA

chapter, and time management (Boone & Boone, 2007, Boone & Boone, 2009; Mundt & Connors, 1999; Myers et al., 2005).

Boone and Boone (2009) suggested a strong consensus exists regarding inadequate compensation as a significant problem throughout the profession. The researchers also indicated balancing a personal and professional life, paperwork, and time management are slight to moderate problems amongst all teachers, regardless of years taught. Interestingly, their study also noted a significant difference in perceived work-life balance between those in a single and multi-teacher department, which suggests agricultural educators employed within a multi-teacher department are more likely to balance their home life with work.

Torres, Lawver, and Lambert (2008) reported one-third of agricultural educators experience significant levels of stress at particular times throughout the year. Several studies indicate agricultural educators work well beyond the 40-hour workweek (Hainline, Ulmer, Ritz, Burris, and Gibson, 2015; Lambert, Henry, and Tummons, 2011; Murray, Flowers, Croom, and Wilson, 2011; Sorensen et al. 2016a; Torres et al., 2008) and the additional expectations and hours they endure contribute to that stress level. Consequently, Lemons et al. (2015) indicated the number of expectations, beyond the scope of the school day, is instrumental in the teacher attrition problem.

Crutchfield et al. (2013) stated, “When teachers assume too much responsibility for activities beyond classroom instruction, there is the potential for negative impact on their commitment to remain [in the profession]” (p. 10). Moreover, many agricultural educators report having insufficient personal time, and they often work throughout the day, without any downtime. They even reveal their personal and social time often revolve around school or FFA activities (Lambert et al., 2011). Lambert et al. (2011) suggested, “Workload and time

management could be a major source of teacher stress and ultimately lead to burnout” (p. 59) for teachers.

Croom (2003) established the foundation for contemporary research surrounding stress and burnout within the profession by examining the three constructs of burnout and their relationship with selected teacher and school characteristics. He discovered agricultural educators generally have low levels of depersonalization and high levels of personal accomplishment (which are positive), but moderate levels of emotional exhaustion (which are negative) indicating they felt “used up” when coming home from work on occasion. Furthermore, he determined teacher and school characteristics did not influence the three constructs, except for teacher age and experience, which related to lower depersonalization scores.

Other studies have also investigated the relationship between burnout and job satisfaction. Chenevey et al. (2008) concluded agricultural educators can be generally satisfied with their careers while experiencing moderate levels of burnout. They also suggest high levels of emotional exhaustion, occupational stress, and personal strain could be potential predecessors to burnout in SBAE teachers. Kitchel et al. (2012) conducted similar research, and included social comparison as a variable. Their initial findings were consistent with the literature related to levels of job satisfaction (Chenevey et al., 2008) and burnout (Croom, 2003). However, when comparing burnout within the social comparison construct, they reported teachers who experience upward comparisons (comparing themselves to colleagues whom they perceive as better at the job than they are), demonstrate less burnout, while teachers who either looked down on their colleagues or felt envious of them, showed higher levels of burnout (Kitchel et al., 2012).

Research examining teacher attrition and the inability of agricultural educators to achieve a work-life balance has been prevalent in the literature during recent years. Murray et al. (2011) suggested the difficulty of an agricultural educator achieving a work-life balance should be concerning for the profession, indicating one-third of teachers in their study struggle to balance the two. Furthermore, Sorensen and McKim (2014) described teaching agriculture as, “Demanding, and balancing work and family roles has become a challenging task for agriculture teachers” (p. 116).

Research has also shown agricultural educators are very capable of achieving a work-life balance (Clark, Kelsey, & Brown, 2014; Sorensen & McKim, 2014; Sorensen et al., 2016a). Clark et al. (2014) discovered career agricultural educators typically experience some negative event, or series of events, early in their career that requires them to reevaluate their career decision and force them to create a positive work-life balance. They also indicate career teachers experience a lessened workload later in their career, which more than likely, helped contribute to finding that previously mentioned work-life balance.

Several researchers have examined the relationship between work-life balance and other variables. Hainline et al. (2015) conducted a study to investigate differences in gender and the ability to obtain a work-life balance. The research concluded female agricultural educators work 7.5 hours per week longer on family and household responsibilities; however, both genders still average more than 58 hours per week at school, which suggests minimal differences exist regarding their ability to achieve a work-life balance.

Sorensen and McKim (2014) conducted a study evaluating the relationship between job satisfaction, career commitment, and work-life balance. They determined a significant, positive correlation exist amongst those variables. Sorensen et al. (2016a) expanded the

literature in this area by examining potential relationships between work and family characteristics. They conclude a positive relationship exists between job satisfaction and the ability to balance work and family. This is consistent with findings from similar studies (Blackburn et al., 2017). Furthermore, they discovered the number of weekly hours worked and being married were significant negative predictors when trying to achieve a work-life balance (Sorensen, McKim, and Velez, 2016a). Additionally, Sorensen, McKim, and Velez (2016b) examined an agricultural educator's intention to leave the profession and perceived work-life conflict. They determined overall, an agricultural educator's intentions to leave the classroom were low and there were no significant differences in work-family conflict variables between genders. However, the researchers did suggest a correlation exists between the increased level of work that interferes with family life and the probability of an agricultural educator to leave teaching. Tippens et al. (2013) agreed, suggesting many teachers simply leave due to family commitments.

Working Conditions

As the literature revealed, factors such as the school environment/ classroom climate, availability of facilities and instructional resources, the quantity of additional expectations, positive interactions and support from stakeholders, as well as student achievement, motivation, and discipline can all play a vital role in determining favorable working conditions within the education profession. Sutchter et al. (2016) reported 55% of a teachers' decision to leave the profession is attributed (in part) to frustration with one or more factors related to their working conditions. Of the four constructs, research describing factors

related to working conditions are the most widespread and prevalent within both the general education and agricultural education literature.

Smith (2009) indicated working conditions, particularly school environment and climate, can be significant predictors of teacher commitment and an educator's decision to stay in the profession. Weiss (1999) suggested a strong correlation exists among school climate, overall job satisfaction, and teacher attrition rates. One factor often thought as contributing to an unbearable classroom climate, are the large class sizes many teachers encounter. Several studies have examined the relationship between class size and teacher attrition, and have determined class size can be a contributing factor to a teacher's decision to switch schools or leave the profession altogether (Kirby, Berends, & Naftel, 1999; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002; Mont & Rees, 1996). However, other studies have shown class size has minimal to no effect on teacher attrition rates (Ingersoll, 2001; Stinebrickner, 1998), suggesting research examining this variable as inconclusive.

Sutcher et al. (2016) reported that 9% of former teachers indicate inadequate facilities and lack of classroom resources as a significant reason they left the profession. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) suggested the lack of instructional resources, in combination with an excessive teaching load, were a major frustration of dissatisfied teachers. Additional workload and responsibilities beyond the school day have also been shown to play a significant role in burnout and a teacher's decision to leave the profession (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

When considering the interactions and support of stakeholders, Sutcher et al. (2016) suggested, "The most significant workplace conditions associated with teacher attrition are teacher's perceptions of their principal, collegial relationships, and school culture" (p. 51).

Frustrations with administration, school policy, and lack of autonomy have all been reported as important or extremely important reasons for educators to leave the profession (Sutcher et al., 2016).

Furthermore, Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkine (2004) reported high levels of student achievement are strongly correlated with the decision to stay in the profession, for both beginning and experienced teachers. Conversely, Ingersoll (2001) cited student lack of motivation and frequent student discipline problems as major teacher attrition factors, with more than 30% of former teachers reporting these as major influencers in their decision to leave the profession.

Within agricultural education, numerous studies have examined the relationship between personal and professional demographics, levels of agricultural educator job satisfaction, and the previously mentioned working conditions. Castillo and Cano (1999) conducted a comparative analysis study examining several job satisfaction journal articles. While they found no significant differences in levels of overall job satisfaction, they did report gender disparities in specific facets of the job as females indicated lower levels of satisfaction with advancement, working conditions, supervision, and factors dealing with school policy and administration compared to their male counterparts.

Several other research articles have also focused on gender differences. The Gilman et al. (2012) study, which examined levels of agricultural educator job satisfaction, determined no significant differences existed between genders. Nevertheless, both groups indicate the work itself was the most satisfying facet of their job while dealing with school policy and administrators was the most dissatisfying component.

Kelsey (2006) specifically explored how these factors affect teacher attrition among women in agricultural education. She discovered women who stayed in the profession had high levels of support from their administrators, were close to tenure, had a high level of job specialization, and were place-bound by their family. Similarly, those who left the profession were also place-bound, but felt a lack of support from their administrators and had lower levels of commitment to the agricultural education profession than the teachers who remained in the classroom.

Researchers within agricultural education have also investigated specific variables relating to the dissatisfaction of various working conditions and their effect on teacher attrition. For instance, Thobega and Miller (2003) determined administrative supervision was not a useful predictor in determining levels of job satisfaction or a teachers' intention to remain in the profession; however, two extraneous variables- teachers' education level and the school environment- proved to increase levels of job satisfaction. Additionally, Delay and Washburn (2013) discovered collaboration can have a positive impact on career satisfaction and has potential to increase the agricultural educator retention rate. Furthermore, Hasselquist, Herndon, and Kitchel (2017) reported overall job satisfaction can be influenced by the administrative, colleague, and financial support received from a teacher's school district, which also contributes to their level of self-efficacy.

Other studies merely focused on motivational and de-motivational factors relating to working conditions and the decision to stay in or leave the profession. Rice, LaVergne, and Gartin (2001) suggested motivational factors encourage teacher longevity within the agricultural education profession. The most common motivational factors for agricultural educators include having highly motivated students, adequate facilities, possessing a

supportive administration, and helping students (Rice et al., 2001). Walker et al. (2004) reported similar findings, indicating teachers most enjoy tasks involving helping students. Common de-motivational factors include lack of student motivation, student discipline problems, problematic guidance counselors, lack of support and instructional materials, and the additional time requirement beyond the school day (Rice et al., 2011). Lemons et al. (2015) indicated that agricultural educators seek alternative employment due to the overwhelming extra responsibilities and expectations placed upon them. Additionally, dealing with administrators and the lack of administrator support was a common reason reported for leaving the profession (Lemons et al., 2015; Rice et al., 2011; Walker et al., 2004).

In recent years, research has focused on factors related to reasons agricultural educators remain in the classroom. Clark et al. (2014) published a study examining various teacher retention variables. The research revealed career teachers have overwhelming support from their administrators, students, parents, and community. The overall essence deduced from the study suggested if agricultural educators are to remain in the profession, they need generous levels of support from both work and home, which can help contribute to high levels of autonomy and greater job satisfaction. Crutchfield et al. (2013) conducted a similar study but focused on determining the relationship between work-life balance, career commitment, work engagement, personal factors, professional life phases, and the decision to remain in the profession. They discovered low to moderate relationships exist among several of the variables, which will be discussed in the next section. However, a 25% variance in career commitment was explained by work engagement and work-life balance combined.

Professional Teacher Life Cycles

Current education literature postulates teachers advance through a series of phases or stages throughout their professional career, often characterized by various personal and educational factors, including years of teaching experience (Eros, 2011). These stages are frequently referenced as “career-cycles” (Fessler & Christensen, 1992) or “life cycles” (Huberman, 1989; Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch, & Enz, 2000) of the professional teacher.

While several models exist describing the concept of a teacher life-cycle, the three most commonly cited in the education literature are the Fessler and Christensen (1992) eight-stage model, the Steffy et al. (2000) six-stage model, and the Huberman (1989) three-stage model. These life cycle models vary as to their number of stages and characteristics within each stage; however, several common attributes exist among them. These models can also provide a glimpse into what teachers may be experiencing at various stages of their career, which may or may not contribute to teacher attrition. This section will explore the similarities and differences between the various professional teacher life cycles, and will then focus on the one chosen to help guide this study.

Considering its implications in creating professional development opportunities for teachers in various phases, the career cycle model developed by Fessler and Christensen (1992) has been one of the most commonly referenced models within the literature. This career cycle model proposes educators have the potential to progress through eight distinct stages throughout their professional careers. These include (1) preservice, (2) induction, (3) competency building, (4) enthusiastic and growing, (5) career frustration, (6) career stability, (7) career wind-down, and (8) career exit. Furthermore, the researchers postulate teachers do not necessarily advance through these stages in a linear fashion, or even circulate through all

of them, as each stage is influenced by additional factors related to their personal and organizational environment (Fessler & Christensen, 1992). Potential factors might include changes in a teacher's family dynamic, a personal crisis, relocation, or even issues surrounding support and interactions with various stakeholders within their organization. Consequently, these variables could provide valuable insight into potential professional development needs, and help to identify potential attrition factors at the various stages of a teacher's career.

The Steffy et al. (2000) teacher life cycle model consists of six phases. These phases include: (1) novice, (2) apprentice, (3) professional, (4) expert, (5) distinguished, and (6) emeritus. Similar to Fessler and Christensen's model (1992), there is no automatic progression through these phases. Steffy et al. (2000) proposed to advance to a subsequent level, a teacher should participate in transformational processes where they reflect upon their experiences, re-evaluate their assumptions and beliefs, and determine their self-worth. This may suggest if the transformative learning process does not occur, a teacher may become disengaged and potentially become bored with the profession.

The last professional teacher life cycle model, commonly found throughout the literature and the one that will be utilized to guide this study, is that of Huberman (1989). Huberman's (1989) model consists of three distinct stages including: (1) novice, (2) mid-career, and (3) late-career teachers. He posits that within the novice stage, three sub-stages emerge including (a) the early novice stage, focusing on survival; (b) the middle novice stage, concentrating on the task of teaching; and (c) the late novice stage, impacting students is the primary concern. Characteristics of the mid-career teacher stage included: career stabilization, experimentation, and taking stock in their work. Finally, the late-career teacher

stage deals with either teacher serenity or the onset of teacher disengagement due to approaching retirement. Similar to the other two models, Huberman (1989) indicated it is not necessarily a linear progression, but more of a process of development whereas teachers migrate in and out of phases as a result of new experiences.

In 2016, The National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) adopted Huberman’s model and revealed an adaptation entitled the “Ag Teacher’s Life Cycle” to showcase their focus areas and programming opportunities (National Association of Agricultural Educators, 2017). Due to the organization’s recent adoption, their emphasis on the teacher recruitment and retention process, and the simplistic nature of the model, Huberman’s (1989) Teacher Career Cycle Model was chosen to guide components of this research study. Table 1 describes the characteristics of the Professional Agriculture Teacher’s Life Cycle.

Table 1

Professional Agriculture Teacher Life Cycle Stages

Stage	Sub-stage	Characteristics
Novice	Early Novice	Surviving in the profession
	Middle Novice	Focusing on the task of teaching
	Late Novice	Concern is impacting students
Mid-Career	Stabilization	Some professional confidence; Settling into a comfortable and predictable teaching pattern
	Experimentation	Experimenting with innovative approaches and activities in the classroom
	Taking Stock	Reflecting on the decision to become a teacher; Contemplating the worth of past work and anticipating plans for the future
Late-Career	Serenity	Comfortable with the classroom and their role in education
	Disengagement	Life beyond the classroom

Note: Adapted from Huberman, 1989; National Association of Agricultural Educators, 2017; White, 2008.

Easterly and Myers (2017) reported, “Limited research has been conducted on teacher career stages in SBAE” (p. 4). Of the studies within agricultural education that incorporate professional life cycles, only one has examined them and its relationship to teacher attrition (Crutchfield et al., 2013). Crutchfield et al. (2013) reported positive correlations of low magnitude exist among a teacher’s vigor, dedication, and absorption, and their professional life phase (PLP). Furthermore, a positive, low magnitude relationship was conveyed between PLP and work engagement, while a negative, low to negligible magnitude correlation was established between PLP and an agriculture educator’s work interfering with family and vice versa. However, their study revealed a positive correlation of moderate magnitude exists between PLP and perception of creating a work-life balance suggesting that achieving a work-life balance is perceived as being attainable for most agricultural educators. All other studies examining the professional life cycle concept, utilized it as a framework or factor when considering implementation of professional development opportunities for various audiences (Easterly & Myers, 2017; Greiman, Walker, & Birkenholz, 2005). No additional research was found examining teacher retention/attrition within the various professional teacher life cycles.

Summary

The field of agricultural education has experienced a consistent labor shortage in the past several decades (Camp et al., 2002; Kantrovich, 2010; Smith, Lawver, & Foster, 2017). Consequently, many school districts struggle to fill their open positions, while others are forced to shut down their agricultural programs due to inadequate staffing (Smith et al.,

2017). Research specifies teacher attrition as the predominant factor behind the shortage (Sutcher et al., 2016).

Tippens et al. (2013) developed a conceptual model describing factors influencing teacher retention/attrition to guide research within agricultural education. An adaptation of that model suggests teacher retention/attrition factors can be categorized into the following four constructs: (1) teacher development (2) compensation (3) personal factors, and (4) working conditions. Much of the literature in teacher attrition has attempted to identify problems agricultural educators encounter that contribute to the various reasons one might leave the profession. Additional literature, has focused on career commitment and why agricultural educators choose to remain in the classroom. These factors were examined within the literature and categorized into one of the newly formed constructs. At this point, only slight to moderate evidence exists ascertaining the primary factors responsible for the high attrition rate in agricultural education. The literature also does not offer any suggestions on how to solve this ongoing problem. Furthermore, no literature was found identifying attrition factors within the various professional teacher life cycles. This gap in the literature suggests a need to further examine this issue and provide evidence and recommendations on how to help remedy the teacher shortage problem.

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CHAPTER III

OVER THE EDGE: FACTORS NUDGING MID-CAREER AGRICULTURAL EDUCATORS OUT OF THE PROFESSION

A paper prepared for submission to the *Journal of Agricultural Education*.
Jay K. Solomonson & Michael S. Retallick

Introduction

Current research indicates the United States is on the cusp of a major teacher shortage. According to the projected demand for teachers, an annual shortfall of 112,000 educators is expected for the foreseeable future with an estimated 300,000 new teachers being required annually through 2020 to keep up with the current demand. (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). Researchers have suggested it is not solely the decline of those entering education causing the teacher shortage, but high teacher attrition is the “driving factor” behind the shortage (Sutcher et al., 2016, p. 38). Researchers report an 8% annual attrition rate with two-thirds of leavers doing so before becoming retirement-eligible (Sutcher et al., 2016). Sutcher et al. (2016) suggested, “Reducing attrition would actually make a greater difference in balancing supply and demand than any other intervention” (p. 37).

The field of agricultural education has not been immune to this problem. History has shown agricultural education has endured a shortage of highly qualified teachers for at least the past four decades (Camp, Broyles, & Skelton, 2002; Kantrovich, 2010; Smith, Lawver, & Foster, 2017). In 2017, the National Agricultural Education Supply and Demand Executive Summary reported there were 1476 openings in 2016, but only 772 college graduates certified in agricultural education to enter the profession (Smith et al., 2017). Disturbingly, more than a quarter of those graduates did not accept a teaching position after completing

their degree. This coupled with the fact that 520 agriculture teachers left the profession before being retirement-eligible, indicates a major problem for the agricultural education profession (Smith et al., 2017).

Numerous studies have attempted to identify issues and isolate factors leading to the teacher attrition problem within agricultural education. Several of the factors, identified by researchers, include: *stress* (Lambert, Henry, & Tummons, 2011; Myers, Dyer, & Washburn, 2005; Torres, Lawver, & Lambert, 2009), *burnout* (Chenevey, Ewing, & Whittington, 2008; Croom, 2003; Kitchel et al., 2012), the *inability to balance work with family life* (Blackburn, Bunch, & Haynes, 2017; Boone & Boone, 2009; Hainline, Ulmer, Ritz, Burris, & Gibson, 2015; Mundt & Connors, 1999; Murray, Flowers, Croom, & Wilson, 2011; Myers et al., 2005; Sorensen, McKim, & Velez, 2016a; Sorensen, McKim, & Velez, 2016b), *possessing a low degree of self-efficacy* (Blackburn & Robinson, 2008; Hasselquist, Herndon, & Kitchel, 2017; Knobloch & Whittington, 2003; McKim & Velez, 2015; Wolf, 2011), *inadequate compensation* (Boone & Boone, 2009; Lemons, Brashears, Burris, Meyers, & Price, 2015), *lack of administrative support* (Boone & Boone, 2007; Castillo & Cano, 1999; Kelsey, 2006; Walker, Garton, & Kitchel, 2004), *lack of student motivation and poor behavior* (Boone & Boone, 2009; Tippens, Ricketts, Morgan, Navarro, & Flanders, 2013), *heavy workload* (Hainline et al., 2015; Lambert et al., 2011; Murray et al., 2011; Sorensen et al., 2016a), *poor working conditions* (Boone & Boone, 2007; Castillo & Cano, 1999; Lemons et al., 2015; Tippens et al., 2013), and *lack of time-management skills* (Boone & Boone, 2007; Boone & Boone, 2009; Mundt & Connors, 1999; Myers et al., 2005), among others.

Furthermore, research has attempted to isolate factors related to agricultural educators' intentions to remain in the profession. The top cited reasons according to these

studies include: *possessing a high initial commitment to the profession* (Crutchfield, Ritz, & Burris, 2013), *receiving generous levels of support from home and work* (Clark, Kelsey, & Brown, 2014; Rice, LaVergne, & Gartin, 2011), *working in a positive school environment* (Thobega & Miller, 2003), *having highly motivated students* (Rice et al., 2011), *receiving adequate compensation* (Warnick, Thompson, & Tarpley, 2010), and *having a high level of autonomy* (Clark et al., 2014).

Moreover, researchers reported agricultural educators are generally satisfied with their careers (Blackburn et al., 2017; Blackburn & Robinson, 2008; Cano & Miller, 1992; Castillo & Cano, 1999; Chenevey et al., 2008; Gilman, Peake, & Parr, 2012; Kitchel et al., 2012; Sorensen & McKim, 2014; Sorensen et al., 2016a; Walker et al., 2004). Conversely, many still leave the teaching profession. This creates an opportunity to establish overall job satisfaction as a leading contributor to high teacher attrition rates, or if specific attrition variables, independently or collectively, have a greater impact on agriculture educators' decision to leave the profession.

Additionally, a considerable amount of the literature has focused on attrition factors of novice teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003; DeAngelis & Presely, 2011; Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), with little research focusing on teachers in other stages of their professional career. While the highest teacher attrition rates occur within the first five years (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014), the profession should also be concerned with the growing number of experienced teachers, specifically mid-career teachers, leaving the profession. Jones-Carey (2016) suggested the, "Dramatic increase in those leaving the profession with eight to twelve years of experience should be sounding a siren" (p.65). Researchers and practitioners agree that in addition to investigating novice teachers, the

profession should begin examining specific job satisfaction factors related to mid-career teacher attrition (Doan & Peters, 2009; Graham, Hudson, & Willis, 2014; Hartsel, 2016; Tye & O'Brien, 2002). Moreover, no literature exists that explicitly examines factors related to mid-career teachers within agricultural education. This study attempted to bridge this gap and examine if overall job satisfaction, is, in fact, a significant contributor to one's decision to leave the profession, and identify potential attrition and retention factors associated with the mid-career agricultural educator career stage.

Theoretical Framework & Literature Review

The theoretical framework for this study was derived from Herzberg, Mausner, and Synderman's Motivator-Hygiene Theory (1959), Grissmer and Kirby's (1987) Human Capital Theory, and Huberman's Professional Life Cycle Model (1989). Herzberg et al. (1959) Motivator-Hygiene Theory postulates that all careers have factors, which lead to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, often occurring concurrently within the workplace. The researchers proposed working conditions could purposively be altered to increase job satisfaction if employers could identify potential areas of dissatisfaction with their employees. Through their research, five satisfaction and dissatisfaction factors were identified which were deemed significant contributors to overall job satisfaction.

The "motivator" or satisfaction factors identified were levels of achievement, advancement, recognition, responsibility, and the work itself. The recognized "hygiene" or dissatisfaction factors were those related to interpersonal relationships, level of supervision, policy and administration, salary, and working conditions (Herzberg et al., 1959). According to the theory, hygiene factors do not create satisfaction, but the lack of them in the workplace causes job dissatisfaction. Furthermore, Herzberg et al. (1959) suggested motivating factors

are a strong indication of satisfaction and they have a lasting effect, unlike the hygiene factors, which only produce short-term changes in job satisfaction. To establish these levels of job satisfaction for teachers, the Brayfield- Rothe Job Satisfaction Index (JSI) (Brayfield & Rothe, 1951), as modified by Warner (1973), was developed. Several variations of this instrument have been utilized within the agricultural education profession to determine levels of job satisfaction of teachers (Blackburn et al., 2017; Blackburn & Robinson, 2008; Cano & Miller, 1992; Castillo & Cano, 1999; Chenevey et al., 2008; Gilman et al., 2012; Walker et al., 2004). As previously mentioned, agricultural educators are generally satisfied with their careers.

Furthermore, the literature reveals satisfaction levels of specific motivation and hygiene factors agricultural educators encounter, which help indicate potential retention/attrition factors within the profession. Castillo and Cano (1999) discovered females showed lower levels of satisfaction with advancement, working conditions, supervision, and factors dealing with school policy and administration compared to their male counterparts. They also examined disparities between novice and experienced teachers, but found no significant difference. Gilman et al. (2012) conducted a similar study investigating gender differences in levels of job satisfaction. While they found no significant differences between genders and indicated both were satisfied with their career, they discovered both groups find the work, itself, as the most satisfying facet of the job, while dealing with school policy and administrators as the least satisfying component. Interestingly, Walker et al. (2004) reported when referring to the job responsibilities of the agricultural educator, those who chose to leave the profession were no more satisfied than those who stayed in secondary agricultural

education, which poses the question if overall job satisfaction is even an indication of teacher attrition.

When examining teachers within their various career stages, Grissmer and Kirby (1987) denoted mid-career teachers typically exhibit the lowest attrition rates amongst the various categories of teachers due to having sufficient human capital. Grissmer and Kirby's Human Capital Theory (1987) hypothesized that individuals will enter or change careers to maximize monetary (salary, benefits, etc.) and nonmonetary benefits (working conditions, support, favorable hours, etc.), while taking into account the costs of additional training or loss of benefits if one would leave their current profession (Grimer & Kirby, 1987). Consequently, Grissmer and Kirby (1987) reported teacher attrition rates were higher in both early career and late career teachers due to either insufficient human capital (for novice teachers) or nearing retirement age (for experienced teachers) and lowest with mid-career teachers who are sufficiently vested within the profession.

To help characterize mid-career educators an adaptation of Huberman's (1989) model of the professional life cycle of teachers was included in this study (Table 1). Huberman's (1989) model consists of three distinct stages including (1) novice, (2) mid-career, and (3) late-career teachers. He theorized that within the novice stage, three sub-stages emerge including (a) the early novice stage, focusing on survival; (b) the middle novice stage, concentrating on the task of teaching, and (c) the late novice stage, impacting students is the primary concern. Characteristics of the mid-career teacher stage include career stabilization, experimentation, and teachers taking stock in their work. Finally, the late-career teacher stage deals with either teacher serenity or the onset of teacher disengagement due to approaching retirement. Huberman (1989) indicated it is not always a linear progression

through the stages, but more of a process of development whereas teachers migrate in and out of them as a result of new experiences. In 2016, The National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) adopted Huberman’s model and revealed an adaptation entitled the “Ag Teacher’s Life Cycle” to showcase their focus areas and programming opportunities (National Association of Agricultural Educators, 2017a).

Table 1

Professional Agriculture Teacher Life Cycle Stages

Years of Teaching	Stage	Sub-stage	Characteristics
1-5	Novice	Early Novice	Surviving in the profession
		Middle Novice	Focusing on the task of teaching
		Late Novice	Concern is impacting students
6-15	Mid-Career	Stabilization	Some professional confidence; Settling into a comfortable and predictable teaching pattern
		Experimentation	Experimenting with innovative approaches and activities in the classroom
		Taking Stock	Reflecting on the decision to become a teacher; Contemplating the worth of past work and anticipating plans for the future
16+	Late-Career	Serenity	Comfortable with the classroom and their role in education
		Disengagement	Life beyond the classroom

Note. Adapted from Huberman, 1989; National Association of Agricultural Educators, 2017a; White, 2008.

Purpose & Objectives

The need for this study is accentuated in the American Association for Agricultural Education’s (AAAE) National Research Agenda and addresses Research Priority 3,

“Sufficient Scientific and Professional Workforce that Addresses the Challenges of the 21st

Century” (Roberts, Harder, & Brashears, 2016). Specifically, it addresses the research question, “What methods, models, and practices are effective in recruiting agricultural leadership, education, and communication practitioners and supporting their success at all stages of their careers?” (Stripling & Ricketts, 2016, p. 31).

The study’s purpose was to identify factors influencing current mid-career agricultural educator’s decision to stay in or leave the teaching profession. Specific objectives of the study were to

- 1) Identify personal and professional characteristics of mid-career agricultural educators participating in the XLR8 program.
- 2) Determine levels of job satisfaction and if overall job satisfaction levels are significantly different for mid-career agricultural educators contemplating leaving the profession and those who are not.
- 3) Identify professional and personal variables that may contribute to a mid-career agricultural educator’s decision to stay in or leave the teaching profession.

Methodology

This mixed-methods study sought to determine levels of job satisfaction and identify potential retention/attrition factors amongst mid-career agricultural educators. The target population for the study was the 2016 National Association of Agricultural Educators XLR8 participants ($N = 20$). This group was purposively selected as they met the researcher’s targeted demographic requirements, possessing between 6 and 15 years of teaching experience. XLR8 is a professional development program designed for agricultural educators with between 7 and 15 years of teaching experience with a primary goal of increasing teacher longevity and job satisfaction (National Association of Agricultural Educators, 2017b).

Agricultural educators had to meet the admission criteria, apply to this program, and be selected by the National Association of Agricultural Educators for participation. Due to this selection process and the overall small population size, caution must be taken when generalizing the subsequent results beyond this group.

After receiving IRB approval (Appendix A), an online survey (Appendix B) was administered through Qualtrics, to the XLR8 participants prior to the 2016 national conference. The instrument was used for the quantitative component of the study and to address research objectives one and two. The researcher developed several demographic questions and utilized the Brayfield-Rothe Job Satisfaction Index (JSI) (Brayfield & Rothe, 1951), as modified by Warner (1973), to determine levels of overall job satisfaction, as well as examine specific motivation and hygiene factors related to one's job (See Appendix C for permission to utilize the instrument). The instrument utilizes variables within Herzberg et al. (1959) Motivator-Hygiene Theory. A panel of experts, consisting of five university agricultural education faculty and graduate students, evaluated the instrument for content and face validity. Minor adjustments were made prior to administering the instrument. Furthermore, due to the extensive use of the JSI within the agricultural education literature, reliability for the instrument was established through earlier research, with the most recent being the Blackburn et al. (2017) study determining a .91 Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the summated scale.

Of the possible 20 participants, 18 completed the survey instrument for a response rate of 90.0% ($n = 18$). Quantitative data were analyzed using Predictive Analytics Software (PASW) v18 for Microsoft Windows. The personal and professional data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies and percentages). Moreover, the data were used

to categorize potential leavers (those who expressed interest in a job outside of teaching) and the stayers (those who did not). Independent-level t-tests were calculated to determine significant differences in job satisfaction and its factors using *a priori* ($p < .05$) of the established groups. Due to the small sample size, Shapiro-Wilk (S-W) tests were also performed to determine normality of the data. Results of the S-W test determined the data related to overall job satisfaction, $W(18) = .936, p = .25$, and job satisfaction with specific facets of the job, $W(18) = .954, p = .50$, were not significantly different than normal.

For the qualitative component of the study, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews, operating under a social constructivism epistemological framework, to address the final research question of this study. Polkinghorne (1989) suggested researchers interview between 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon under investigation. Of the 20 participants in the 2016 XLR8 cohort, 13 consented and were interviewed during the conference. Elements of the social constructivism framework were embedded in the data collection techniques. Furthermore, Moustakas (1994) indicated the social constructivist worldview is present in phenomenological studies where participants describe their experiences. Hence, a phenomenological approach was utilized to understand the phenomenon of mid-career agricultural educators leaving the profession.

In the phenomenological approach, the researcher describes, “The common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). Two main authorities on phenomenology, Moustakas (1994) and Van Manen (1990), operate using several defining features, which are included in almost all phenomenological studies. These include an emphasis on the phenomenon, interviewing a heterogeneous group of individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon, incorporating

the use of bracketing, data analysis that moves from narrow units to broader units, and ending with a discussion on the essence of the experience (Creswell, 2013).

Creswell (2013) indicated data collection in phenomenological studies consists of in-depth interviews with the participants who experienced the phenomenon. The researchers conducted face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with these individuals. Questions were prepared ahead of time, which were developed with the theoretical framework in mind. A panel of five experts reviewed the questions for validity before interviewing. No changes were made. All interviews were recorded onsite, then transcribed word-for-word. Furthermore, an open-coding technique was used to identify concepts, significant statements, and create themes and connections to the phenomenon of interest. These statements were used to write textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon, and then synthesized into the essence for this component of the study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicated qualitative researchers develop reliability and validity through the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability attained through their methods. Credibility can be related to the level of confidence in the researcher and their experiences. The researchers have had extensive experience within school-based agricultural education, totaling more than 20 years in the secondary classroom. To ascertain transferability, the research participants were purposively selected for the study based on their experiences with the phenomenon. To help achieve a high level of dependability procedures, benchmarks were kept in place and followed. These included using peer-reviewed, credible resources; transcribing data word-for-word following the interviews; having participants check for the accuracy of the transcripts; and utilization of a mentor to make sure proper procedures and policies were followed. Confirmability was established by

bracketing the biases of the researcher. Bracketing is a method used in qualitative research which requires the investigator to put aside their beliefs about the research topic (Creswell, 2013).

Findings

Objective one

The purpose of objective one was to determine the personal and professional characteristics of the mid-career agricultural educators participating in this study. Those participating self-identified as 55.6% female ($n = 10$) and 44.4% male ($n = 8$). Of the participants, 72.2% ($n = 13$) had completed a traditional teacher certification program, while 27.8% ($n = 5$) were alternatively certified. More than half (55.6%, $n = 10$) of the participants have explored other career options outside of agricultural education within the past year. These participants looked at job postings, applied for another job, and/or were offered a job outside of teaching. For methodological purposes, these individuals were classified as a “leaver.” The remaining population (44.4%, $n = 8$) indicated they had not explored a career outside of agricultural education within the past year. These individuals will be classified as a “stayer.” Additional personal and professional characteristics can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Selected Personal and Professional Characteristics of Mid-Career Agricultural Educators Participating in the 2016 XLR8 Conference (n=18)

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Age		
≤30	1	5.56%
31-34	5	27.78%
35-39	9	50.00%
40 +	3	16.67%
Gender		
Female	10	55.56%
Male	8	44.44%

Table 2 (continued)

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Type of Certification		
Traditional Certification	13	72.22%
Alternative Certification	5	27.78%
Highest Level of Education Completed		
Master's Degree	12	66.67%
Bachelor's Degree	6	33.33%
Marital Situation		
Married (with children at home)	15	83.33%
Married (no children, no children living at home)	3	16.67%
Single	0	0.00%
Divorced or Widowed	0	0.00%
Have Explored a Career Outside of Ag Education this past year		
Yes* (Looked at Job Postings ¹ , Applied for Another Job ² , Been Offered Another Job ³)	10	55.6%
No**, have not explored a job outside of Ag Ed this past year	8	44.4%

Note. ¹Have looked at job postings outside of teaching agriculture ($n=10$); ²Have applied for a job outside of agriculture ($n=4$); ³Have been offered a job outside of teaching agriculture ($n=2$); *Classified as a potential leaver of the profession, **Classified as an individual who plans to stay teaching high school agricultural education.

Objective two

Objective two sought to describe job satisfaction levels of mid-career agricultural educators and determine if overall job satisfaction levels were significantly different between those contemplating leaving the profession and those not. Results indicated the participants were generally satisfied with their careers ($M = 3.72$, $SD = .31$) and no significant differences existed between our leavers and stayers (Table 3).

Table 3

<i>Overall Job Satisfaction of Mid-Career Agricultural Educators (n = 18)</i>								
	Total ($n=18$)		Leavers ($n=10$)		Stayers ($n=8$)		t-test	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Overall Job Satisfaction	3.72	.31	3.60	.30	3.88	.26	-2.05	.06

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Undecided, 4= Agree, and 5= Strongly Agree.

The results did illustrate a statistically significant difference between the leavers and stayers in two specific job satisfaction factor categories. Independent-level t-tests indicate those contemplating leaving the profession were significantly different in the level of recognition they receive ($t(16) = -2.26, p = .04$) with a large effect size of 1.07 (Cohen's d) and satisfaction with their school policies and administration ($t(16) = -2.97, p = .01$) with a large effect size of 1.44 (Cohen's d). Refer to Table 4 for additional results involving the other motivation-hygiene factors.

Table 4

Levels of Job Satisfaction with Specific Facets of the Job Between Those Contemplating Leaving and Those Who Are Not (n= 18)

Specific Job Satisfaction Factors	Leavers (n = 10)		Stayers (n = 8)		t-test	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Motivation Factors						
Level of Achievement	4.90	.74	5.25	.71	-1.02	.32
Level of Advancement	4.40	.84	4.75	.89	-.86	.41
Level of Recognition	3.90	.99	5.00	1.07	-2.26	.04*
Level of Responsibility	5.10	.57	5.13	.84	-.08	.94
The Work Itself	5.10	.57	5.25	.71	-.50	.62
Hygiene Factors						
Interpersonal Relationships	4.60	1.17	4.75	1.23	-.26	.80
Level of Supervision	4.50	1.35	4.63	.74	-.23	.82
Salary	3.20	1.62	3.25	1.49	-.07	.95
School Policy and Admin.	2.70	1.57	4.63	1.06	-2.97	.01*
Working Conditions	4.10	1.79	5.25	.71	-1.70	.11

Note. 1 = Very Dissatisfied, 2= Somewhat Dissatisfied, 3= Slightly Dissatisfied, 4= Slightly Satisfied, 5= Somewhat Satisfied, and 6= Very Satisfied; *Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Objective three

Objective three sought to identify professional and personal variables, which may contribute to a mid-career agricultural educators' decision to stay in or leave the teaching profession. Participants were asked to respond to a series of questions geared toward

assessing potential retention and attrition factors. After analyzing the data through an open-coding procedure, several concepts were identified, which then emerged as three distinct themes. The concepts identified include (a) passionate about students, (b) autonomy and variety, (c) pride in the program and its successes (d) support, (e) changing family dynamics, (f) working all the time, and (g) compensation. The following themes emerged from these concepts: (1) Mid-career agricultural educators value many aspects of their job, particularly student and program successes, autonomy and variety, and stakeholder support, (2) Mid-career agricultural educators often experience additional successes at school, but at the expense of their personal lives, (3) While compensation was deemed important, many mid-career agricultural educators value their time over money.

Theme 1: Mid-career agricultural educators value many aspects of their job, particularly student and program successes, autonomy and variety, and stakeholder support.

The first theme helps identify mid-career agricultural educators' intentions to remain in the teaching profession. Most participants indicated their greatest enjoyment comes from working with students and being a part of their successes. One teacher told us, "I do the job for the kids and to make a difference. To be there for the support they need... if I wasn't there, it just wouldn't be there." Another teacher expressed, "I love that every day there is an opportunity to truly make a difference in the lives of a student." One individual referred to this as "teacher crack." He articulated,

Whether it's showing a young man how to weld...or after competing in a FFA competition ...they come back and say, "thank you, [name]." It means a lot to

me. It's also when they come back after graduation three years down the road, or when they ask you to be in their wedding. When they become leaders in your town... they still come back and tell you "thank you, we appreciate you." That's what you get up for... I think when you have comments like that, it's like crack.

One teacher explained he had recently considered leaving the profession, but was worried about how it would affect his students. He indicated, "I will say that I have considered leaving the classroom... that's always been something I struggle with because I love teaching kids." These teachers genuinely care about students, and regardless if they stay in the profession, they want all students to be successful. One other teacher reflected,

I believe in the work. I believe in what it does for kids. It's every time that one of those guys or girls comes back and says, "that's the best thing that ever happened to me." That's why you do it. I don't do it for the kids that are naturally talented.... I don't get out of bed for them. I get out of bed for the kid that doesn't have a shot, otherwise.

Furthermore, due to several of the mid-career teachers having spent a majority of their career in the same school district, they tend to become extremely devoted to their programs and its successes. Several teachers indicated at this stage of their career, they had invested too much of themselves into their programs to leave. One teacher indicated, "It's home, it's my community... I feel firmly attached to it." Another teacher said, "I am passionate about the program I've built and the work that I've done." Additionally, another individual disclosed,

I think in my community, and where I'm at, this is what I was meant to do.

This is where I need to be. I'm not going to do this anywhere else. Honestly, if I leave [school], I probably won't teach Ag, and I don't want to do that, so I'm not going anywhere.

Several teachers were also cognizant their children might someday be in their programs and struggled with the idea of not being there. One of them revealed,

Why would I leave when my own children haven't had the opportunity... not saying that someone else couldn't do it better and different, but I've worked so hard to get all this stuff... Why don't I want to stay and let my own children experience what I have to offer? And you know, that's what keeps me coming back.

Another teacher had a similar sentiment expressing

We gave up a lot with our kids when they were birth to five... If I leave, then the first 15 years of me investing in the program... if it was worthy enough for other people's kids, it's probably worthy enough for my children. I'm not ready to pass that off. We put our time in and sacrificed for this community.

I want my kids to be a part of that... it is a lifetime of investment in my community, which also includes my children.

Moreover, several teachers expressed that they enjoy the variety and high level of autonomy they are given within their school district. One teacher indicated, "I have a lot of freedom. I can take a bus during class, and we go to the farm... I think they allow me to do this because of the number of hours I put in." Other teachers discussed how they enjoy the variety afforded by agricultural education. One teacher said, "I love my job. I wouldn't

want to be anything else. I love what I get to do every day, and I love that it's different every day. I love that my kids, although at times can be annoying, they spice up my life, and they change what's going on." Another teacher told us, "It's different every day. It's not monotonous because you're dealing with people, everyone's different."

All interviewees discussed how they valued the support they received from various stakeholders at work, several mentioning their administration and community. While some teachers expressed extreme dislike for their current administration, several articulated an appreciation for their administrators and praised the support they bestow upon them and their programs. One teacher told us, "I've been blessed my whole career, especially the last five years with having a fantastic administration. We've got a district administrator, and she just gets it." Another teacher gave similar comments indicating, "I'm pretty lucky. I have a really supportive administration and community. However, I do believe they could be the absolute downfall of your program." Several teachers agreed suggesting unsupportive administration can strongly impact a teachers' decision to leave the profession. One teacher said, "Administration... they don't understand what we do." Another indicated, "Things have gotten worse because of administration. We went through an administrative change about three years ago, and while I have a ton of community support... I don't see the program going anywhere." Interestingly, when discussing this issue, one teacher noted,

We didn't get into education because of administrators, so don't let them be the reason why we don't like our jobs. We value our jobs for several things, so just remember that. I have to tell myself that a few times a year.

Every one of the mid-career teachers admitted they struggled with some aspect of their job, but were still there because of their students, the dedication and sacrifices they

made for their programs, the freedom and variety the job affords, and the support they receive from their school and community. When one teacher was asked why they stay in the profession, they said, “There is more that I like than I don’t like. Otherwise, I wouldn’t be here.”

Theme 2: Mid-career agricultural educators often experience additional successes at school, but at the expense of their personal lives.

Theme two begins to reveal reasons mid-career agricultural educators may contemplate their career choice. Many began by discussing the achievements of their programs, citing an increased efficacy in the classroom and the successes of their FFA chapters. One teacher noted, “Every year I feel like I get stronger in the classroom, including my content understanding. I am always trying new things... We qualified a [CDE] team for nationals this year, which I thought would never happen.” Another teacher told us, “We have had a lot of success this past year. We have the banners that justify that.” However, as they disclosed their successes, many mentioned the sacrifices it took and emphasized their struggle with balancing their personal and professional lives. One individual expressed,

Last year was marked by great successes, but also, we worked really hard to get those great successes... We put a lot of notches on the wall so to speak, but it came at a price, lots of different prices throughout the year. I had to cash in some capital, so to speak, with family and other teachers and administrators... All the late nights, dragging in late... You can have a lot of success, but at what cost to the very students bringing you that success? What

costs to your family? What cost to the school system that you profess to be in?

Several other agricultural educators discussed a similar displeasure with the substantial out-of-classroom expectations and how it took time away from family. One teacher disclosed the amount of time she spent working this past year and professed, “My son turned one, and I realized that went way too fast. I’ve always heard that, but it’s different when you’re a parent, and you see how fast it goes, and I was like... something’s got to change.” Another teacher said,

I have a set plan of what I’m doing, and I know how the system runs, and I know what I’m expected to do... For me, the new challenge is balancing my children in with what I’m doing, because they’re becoming of the age that my oldest is starting to do sports and wants to do this activity and that activity... and I’m like, “wait a minute, how do I manage everybody else’s stuff, including mine?”

These factors seem to weigh heavily on the minds of mid-career teachers. An additional teacher mentioned, “When I get home, I always go in and see my kids.... if I didn’t get to put them to bed or read them a story... that stuff weighs on me.” One female teacher seemed overwhelmed with her work-life struggles by indicating, “Eighty percent of the childcare falls on me... all the transporting, cooking, day-to-day... It gives me less time to meet my work commitments, and that’s been very stressful.” One individual noted, “I think if I could find a job where I could make a comparable income with a regular schedule, and know I could be home for my kids at 5:00 every night... I would be sorely tempted right now.” One teacher confessed,

I think that if I didn't have a strong family support... I don't think I'd still be where I am. There is a job that I know is going to open, that is going to take me out of the classroom. It's just a matter of time, and when it does and if it fits in with my personal life, I'm gone because there's a limit to how much you can put in without getting back what you need.

Theme 3: While compensation was deemed important, many mid-career agricultural educators value their time over money.

Theme three helps ascertain the perceived level of significance related to the top attrition factors identified throughout the study. While several attrition factors surfaced, two major variables kept emerging, the time commitment beyond the school day and low compensation. Additionally, in each interview that divulged these two factors, the researchers inquired about which they deemed more important.

When discussing the time commitment issue, one teacher disclosed, "I struggle with time away from family, time away from my classes, and time just for myself." Another teacher mentioned, "I spend zero-time planning for instruction which should be the number one thing we do... I spend all my time getting money, doing administrative paperwork, and FFA stuff. I don't get to work with kids... I'm an administrator." Others teachers also discussed their dislike for the administrative aspects of the job, and the excessive time it takes to complete. One particular teacher told us, "There's an administrative aspect of the job that a monkey could do with some training. Stop making me do all these online forms... this is just more paperwork. It is less time for me to prepare in my classroom."

Several teachers acknowledged the profession places too many expectations upon our teachers and the lack of personal and family time is detrimental to the profession. One teacher suggested, “I think to keep people there long enough to realize the value of what their impact is, you have to compensate them, or you’re going to lose them to industry.” Several others agreed, suggesting the need to pay teachers a fair salary and adequately compensate them for their time beyond their regular contract. One teacher noted, “When trying to work that many hours, then compare it to how much you’re getting paid... you’re working for less than minimum wage. I would venture to say 35-60 cents an hour... it’s tough.” Conversely, when asked which factor they deemed more important- time or compensation, an overwhelming majority of these mid-career teachers indicated they wanted their time back. One noted, “More money is not the answer... I need more time... you can’t throw money at the problem. Sometimes you have to throw time at the problem.” Another teacher disclosed,

I can’t add anything to my plate that takes away from my family, my kids, my wife, or my family farm. I will not. You could offer me more money. I will not take it; it’s not worth it. There’s no more hours in the day... absolutely, not worth it. You can’t compensate me enough.

Conclusions, Implications, & Recommendations

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to identify factors influencing current mid-career agricultural educator’s decision to stay in or leave the teaching profession. Previous agricultural education research has identified retention/attrition factors, but none focus on factors within the mid-career professional life stage. This study examined overall job satisfaction and specific retention/attrition factors reported by mid-career teachers

participating in the 2016 National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) XLR8 professional development program.

To address the quantitative component of the study, researchers distributed an online survey to gather personal and professional characteristics and ascertain levels of job satisfaction of mid-career agricultural educators. This component of the study yielded responses from 18 of the 20 teachers participating in the XLR8 program. Interestingly, 55.6% ($n = 10$) of the mid-career agricultural educators participating in XLR8 indicated they were looking at job postings and/or interviewing for positions outside of agricultural education, with 11.1% ($n = 2$) receiving a job offer within the past year. Less than half (44.4%, $n = 8$), had not explored a career outside the profession within the past year. These data were utilized to establish groups to run the inferential statistics.

Descriptive statistics and independent-level t-tests were utilized to determine levels of job satisfaction and if overall job satisfaction levels are significantly different between mid-career agricultural educators contemplating leaving the profession and those not. It can be concluded the mid-career agricultural educators who participated in XLR8 were more satisfied than dissatisfied with their job. This is consistent with the literature reporting agricultural educators as being satisfied with their careers (Blackburn et al., 2017; Blackburn & Robinson, 2008; Cano & Miller, 1992; Castillo & Cano, 1999; Chenevey et al., 2008; Gilman, Peake, & Parr, 2012; Kitchel et al., 2012; Sorensen & McKim, 2014; Sorensen et al., 2016a; Walker et al., 2004). Furthermore, there were no significant differences in overall job satisfaction between those contemplating leaving the classroom and those who were not. This finding supports the literature suggesting those who leave the agricultural education

profession are no more satisfied than those who remain in the profession (Walker et al., 2004).

Interestingly, the data revealed differences between potential leavers and stayers in the areas of job satisfaction related to the level of recognition they receive and issues with school policy and administration. Those teachers exploring careers outside of agricultural education showed significantly lower mean scores in these two areas. This may suggest teachers consider leaving the profession because they feel underappreciated. If these teachers are not receiving adequate appreciation at the local level, additional recognition programs of mid-career teachers at the regional and state level should be considered. As this is a variable not proven to be a significant factor within the agricultural education literature, further research investigating perceptions of mid-career agricultural educators and the level of recognition they receive is recommended.

Moreover, when examining the difference between potential leavers and stayers in the area of school policy and administration, it is plausible higher levels of support mid-career agricultural educators receive from their administrators, will contribute to higher levels of job satisfaction. This is consistent with previous findings implying dissatisfaction with school administration as a significant problem agricultural educators encounter in the profession (Boone & Boone, 2007; Castillo & Cano, 1999; Kelsey, 2006; Walker, Garton, & Kitchel, 2004). As several participants inferred their administrators did not understand agricultural education, a recommendation would be to develop a regional or state program for administrators to showcase opportunities and impact of agricultural education and FFA.

When evaluating the qualitative component of the study, several interesting conclusions can be drawn from the findings. Foremost, it is interesting to note the retention

factors identified influential for mid-career agricultural educators are similar to those for all agricultural educators. Working with motivated students, autonomy, variety, and support was frequently identified as reasons the participants enjoyed their jobs. This is consistent with the previous literature identifying factors related to agricultural educators' intentions to remain in the profession (Clark et al., 2014, Rice et al., 2014). However, a unique variable for this population included a passion for their programs and commitment to ensure it remains successful. This was likely to occur due to the significant investment of non-monetary capital to their agriculture programs and FFA chapters. Grissmer and Kirby's (1987) Human Capital Theory supports this finding.

When examining reported attrition factors, it was apparent teachers within the mid-career professional life stage were struggling to balance their personal and professional lives due to changing family dynamics. This is consistent with literature indicating agricultural educators struggle with obtaining a work-life balance (Blackburn et al., 2017; Boone & Boone, 2009; Hainline et al., 2015; Mundt & Connors, 1999; Murray et al., 2011; Myers et al., 2005; Sorensen et al., 2016a; Sorensen et al., 2016b). Many indicated being recently married, or were having children, and found they were struggling to balance that dynamic with their professional life. Interestingly, many also discussed that while they were undergoing these difficulties at home, they were experiencing additional successes within their agricultural programs. However, they were beginning to become aware of the costs surrounding those successes. To help address this issue it is recommended purposeful professional development, similar to the National Association of Agricultural Educators XLR8 program, should be developed at the state level to involve additional teachers struggling with these issues.

Finally, one key finding in this study is that many mid-career agricultural educators value their time above compensation. While they acknowledge the importance of being adequately compensated for their time and effort, they indicated they value their time more at this stage of their career. The literature acknowledges compensation as a leading attrition factor (Boone & Boone, 2009; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Lemons et al., 2015; Sutchter et al., 2016; Warnick et al., 2010), but little research has specifically examined this factor for those within the mid-career professional life stage. Teachers in this study revealed they were making enough money at this point in their career, that compensation was no longer a leading factor. While they admitted they still were not compensated enough for the hours they put in, they would rather have some time back than more hours and additional compensation.

This study has strong implications for the profession and state and national leaders must recognize the additional expectations (paperwork, deadlines, additional days, etc.) they place upon teachers, are extremely influential in stress levels, especially on teachers struggling to balance their personal and professional lives. One recommendation for state leaders, CTE directors, and administrators would be to evaluate the expectations they place upon teachers. Consolidation of activities and events, which would eliminate additional days away from home, should also be considered. Further research investigating retention rates in states, which consolidate events and activities, should be conducted. Moreover, it is recommended the quantitative component of this study be replicated nationally, with a larger sample size, to gain a better understanding of agricultural educator job satisfaction and attrition factors for mid-career agricultural educators.

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CHAPTER IV

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ILLINOIS AGRICULTURAL EDUCATORS' FINAL DECISION TO LEAVE THE CLASSROOM

A paper prepared for submission to the *Journal of Agricultural Education*.

Jay K. Solomonson, Michael S. Retallick

Debra S. Korte, Erica B. Thieman, and Kari H. Keating

Introduction

Teacher attrition – a phenomenon describing teachers who permanently leave the profession of teaching – is a concern across all disciplines of education. Ingersoll, Merrill, and Stuckey (2014) reported more than 41% of all teachers will leave teaching within their first five years resulting in significant employee turnover within the profession each year. Furthermore, teacher attrition inflicts substantial financial costs on school districts (Haynes, 2014) and negatively impacts student achievement (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2012).

Researchers have identified several predictor variables, which teachers identify as reasons to leave the profession. These reasons include poor salary, heavy workload, excessive teaching and non-teaching responsibilities, school climate and environment, lack of control and autonomy, burnout, stress, student behavior, family or personal reasons, feelings of isolation, principal leadership, feelings of powerlessness with important decision-making, and lack of support (Burke, Aubusson, Schuck, Buchanan, & Prescott, 2015; Burke, Greenglass, & Schwarzer, 1996; Coladarci, 1992).

Within the field of agricultural education, the rate of teacher attrition over the last several decades has led to a shortage of highly qualified school-based agricultural education teachers (Kantrovich, 2010). As reported in the 2016 Executive Summary of the National Agricultural Education Supply and Demand Study, nearly half of teachers who left the profession (46.8%) moved to employment opportunities in business/industry, education or

educational administration (outside of agricultural education), production agriculture/farming, extension or non-formal education, adult education, or home/caregiver roles. The challenges associated with balancing attrition and low recruitment, with the addition of new programs, left 66 unfilled full-time vacancies nationwide for the 2016-2017 academic year (Smith, Lawver, & Foster, 2017).

Specific to agricultural education, researchers have determined agricultural educators are generally satisfied with their careers (Blackburn, Bunch, & Haynes, 2017; Blackburn & Robinson, 2008; Cano & Miller, 1992; Castillo & Cano, 1999; Chenevey, Ewing, & Whittington, 2008; Gilman, Peake, & Parr, 2012; Kitchel, Smith, Henry, Robinson, Lawver, Park, & Schell, 2012; Sorensen & McKim, 2014; Sorensen, McKim, & Velez, 2016a; Walker, Garton, & Kitchel, 2004), but tend to leave the profession for one or more specific reasons. Although several researchers have investigated teachers' perceptions of attrition factors by sampling agricultural educators currently in the profession, very few studies have asked former teachers for their reflective perceptions about their choice to leave.

Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

The conceptual framework developed for this study was derived from research conducted by Tippens, Ricketts, Morgan, Navarro, and Flanders (2013). The researchers introduced a conceptual model of primary causes of teacher attrition in agricultural education to guide research within this area. The model was constructed using Grissmer and Kirby's (1987) Human Capital Theory and Ingersoll's (2003) work with teacher attrition (Tippens et al., 2013). Tippens et al. (2013) hypothesized agriculture teacher retention or attrition is determined by overall job satisfaction, which is a result of four constructs of variables: (1)

employment factors, (2) working conditions, (3) family and personal factors, and (4) compensation.

An adaptation of Tippens et al. (2013) model, which more broadly defines each of the different variables, will be used as the conceptual framework for this study. Moreover, because current literature consistently reports agricultural educators are generally satisfied with their careers, the overarching job satisfaction variable was eliminated from the revised model. Walker et al. (2004) reported when referring to the job responsibilities of the agricultural educator, similar levels of overall job satisfaction exist among those who stay in and those who leave the agricultural teaching profession. Using that evidence, the modified model suggests one or more of the specific job satisfaction variables, within the proposed constructs, can directly impact teacher retention/attrition without being attributed to overall job satisfaction. The four revised constructs identified within the adapted model, which serve as the framework for this study, include: (1) teacher development, (2) personal factors, (3) compensation, and (4) working conditions. (Figure 1).

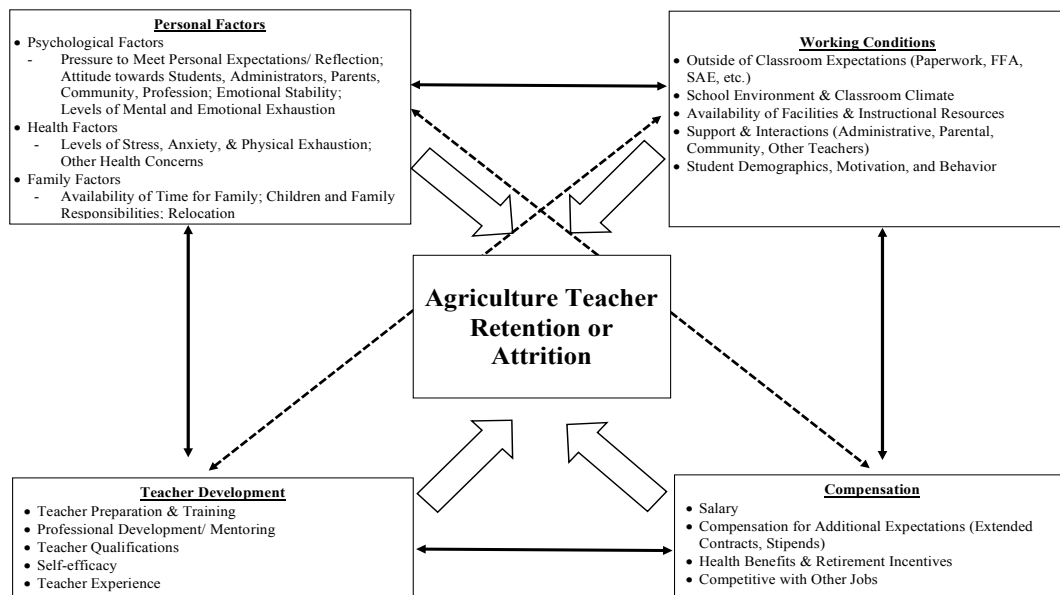


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Factors Influencing Agricultural Education Teacher Retention or Attrition. Adapted from Tippens et al. (2013)

Teacher Development

A review of the literature revealed the following activities increase teacher retention: sufficient teacher preparation and training, purposeful professional development and induction activities, possessing moderate to high levels of self-efficacy, and increased experiences in the classroom. Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2014) reported that novice teachers, who have acquired ample training in teaching methods and pedagogy, are more likely to remain in the profession than those with less coursework and training. Moreover, Robinson and Edwards (2012) reported traditionally certified agricultural educators are more likely to remain in the profession than those receiving an alternative type of certification. Furthermore, sufficient professional development and induction programs have shown to have a positive impact on retaining teachers within the profession (Haynes, 2014; Ingersoll, 2003; Krasnoff, 2014). Touchstone (2015) implied agricultural teacher retention rates could be improved by identifying problems agricultural educators confront and by designing professional development and mentoring activities based on those needs. Peiter, Terry, and Cartmell (2005) confirmed this by indicating these programs provide various types of assistance for teachers.

A teacher's level of preparedness and self-efficacy has also been shown to be strongly correlated with one's intention to remain in the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002). Blackburn and Robison (2008) reported a high, positive correlation between job satisfaction and an agricultural educator's perceived level of self-efficacy. Swan, Wolf, and Cano (2011) indicated this relationship is particularly true for novice agricultural educators. Furthermore, Knobloch and Whittington (2003) stated that beginning teachers, with high initial levels of career commitment, will also possess a higher level of self-efficacy.

Several other studies observed this finding by reporting career commitment as a strong predictor of teacher retention (Crutchfield, Ritz, & Burris, 2013; Sorensen & McKim, 2014). Moreover, the literature revealed the likelihood of a teacher leaving the profession drops off significantly after year five (Allen, 2005), suggesting teacher retention can be attributed, in part, to additional years of teaching experience.

Personal Factors

Ingersoll and Smith (2003) reported 42% of former teachers cite personal factors as a reason for leaving the profession. Personal factors that could contribute to the decision to leave the profession include: family influences, health factors, and psychological reasons. This would encompass common stressors of teachers, factors related to teacher burnout, and the lack of a work-life balance. Lambert, O'Donnell, Kusherman, and McCarthy (2006) characterized the teaching profession as, "Emotionally taxing and potentially frustrating" (p. 105). Consequently, it is reasonable to believe many educators experience high levels of stress that could take a toll on themselves and their families. The common stressors of agricultural educators include dealing with administration, building support for the program, paperwork, classroom management, student motivation and discipline, inadequate compensation, balancing a personal and professional life, inadequate facilities and equipment, managing the FFA chapter, and time management (Boone & Boone, 2007, Boone & Boone, 2009; Mundt & Connors, 1999; Myers et al., 2005).

Torres, Lawver, and Lambert (2008) reported at least one-third of agricultural educators experience significant levels of stress at particular times throughout the year. These stresses can often lead to physical, emotional, and psychological burnout (McCarthy,

Lambert, O'Donnell, & Melendres, 2009). Several studies have shown agricultural educators experience low to moderate levels of burnout at various points during the year, often when workload increases (Chenevey et al., 2008; Croom, 2003; Kitchel et al., 2012). Furthermore, Farkas, Johnson, and Foleno (2000) reported that 81% of teachers indicate their job must allow adequate time for family obligations. However, due to an increased workload, their family time often suffers.

Murray, Flowers, Croom, and Wilson (2011) suggested the difficulty of an agricultural educator achieving a work-life balance should be concerning for the profession, indicating one-third of teachers struggle to balance the two. Several studies confirm this battle (Hainline, Ulmer, Ritz, Burris, and Gibson, 2015; Sorensen & McKim, 2014); however, research has also proven agricultural educators are capable of achieving work-life balance (Clark, Kelsey, & Brown, 2014; Sorensen & McKim, 2014; Sorensen McKim, and Velez, 2016a). Moreover, Sorensen, McKim, and Velez (2016b) denoted a relationship between an increased level of work that interferes with family life and the probability of an agricultural educator to leave teaching. Tippens et al. (2013) agreed, suggesting many teachers simply leave due to family commitments.

Compensation

Compensation is another factor commonly associated with teacher recruitment and retention. The literature suggests individuals are more likely to enter the profession when starting salaries are competitive with other careers (Loeb & Beteillie, 2009). Furthermore, Gray and Taie (2015) reported that when a teacher's starting salary is \$40,000/year or higher, attrition rates are 10% lower after the first year and 9% lower after five years, respectively.

However, according to the National Education Association (NEA), the national average starting teacher salary, during the 2012-2013 school year, was only \$36,141 (National Education Association, 2017).

Ingersoll and Smith (2003) indicated that close to 78% of teachers who leave the profession are dissatisfied with their salary. Several studies within agricultural education have suggested that compensation is a significant factor in a teacher's decision to stay or leave the profession (Bennett, Iverson, Rohs, Langone, & Edwards, 2002; Boone and Boone, 2009; Lemons, Brashears, Burriss, Meyers, and Price. 2015; Warnick, Thompson, & Tarpley, 2010). Furthermore, Johnson and Birkeland (2003) suggested that compensation undeniably contributes to the decision to leave the profession, but interestingly, is only secondary to other factors such as poor working conditions.

Working Conditions

Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas (2016) reported 55% of teachers' decision to leave the profession is attributed, in part, to frustration with one or more factors related to their working conditions. Smith (2009) indicated working conditions, particularly school environment and climate, can be significant predictors of teacher commitment and an educator's decision to stay in the profession. Additionally, Sutcher et al. (2016) reported 9% of former teachers indicate inadequate facilities and lack of classroom resources as a significant reason they left the profession. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) confirmed that the lack of instructional resources, in combination with an excessive teaching load, was a major frustration of unsatisfied teachers.

The excessive teaching load and responsibilities beyond the school day have consistently been reported as significant factors in burnout and eventually the teacher's decision to leave the profession (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Crutchfield et al. (2013) stated, "When teachers assume too much responsibility for activities beyond classroom instruction, there is the potential for negative impact on their commitment to remain [in the profession]" (p. 10). Several studies have indicated agricultural educators work well beyond the 40-hour workweek (Hainline et al. 2015; Lambert, Henry, and Tummons, 2011; Murray et al., 2011; Sorensen et al. 2016a; Torres et al., 2008) and the additional expectations and hours they endure contribute to their decision to leave the classroom. Consequently, Lemons et al. (2015) confirmed this previous statement by suggesting the amount of additional expectations, beyond the scope of the school day, is instrumental in the teacher attrition problem.

Furthermore, Sutchter et al. (2016) suggested, "The most significant workplace conditions associated with teacher attrition are teachers' perceptions of their principal, collegial relationships, and school culture" (p. 51). Frustrations with their administration, school policy, and lack of autonomy have all been reported as important or extremely important reasons for educators to leave the profession (Sutchter et al., 2016). Dealing with administrators and the lack of administrator support are common reasons reported for leaving the profession (Kelsey, 2006; Lemons et al., 2015; Rice, LaVergne, & Gartin, 2011; Walker et al., 2004). Inversely, those with overwhelming support from their administrators and other various stakeholders tend to stay in the profession (Clark et al., 2014; Rice et al., 2001).

Purpose and Objectives

The need for this study addresses the American Association for Agricultural Education's (AAAE) National Research Agenda Research Priority 3 as, "Sufficient Scientific and Professional Workforce that Addresses the Challenges of the 21st Century" (Roberts, Harder, & Brashears, 2016). Specifically, this priority poses the research question, "What methods, models, and practices are effective in recruiting agricultural leadership, education, and communication practitioners and supporting their success at all stages of their careers?" (Stripling & Ricketts, 2016, p. 31).

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine factors associated with former Illinois Agricultural Educators final decision to leave the profession. Specific research objectives included:

1. Describe the personal and professional characteristics of Illinois Agricultural Educators who chose to leave the secondary agricultural education profession.
2. Describe the factors that impact teachers' final decision to leave the secondary agricultural education profession.
3. Determine the relationship among teachers' personal and professional characteristics, the teacher attrition/retention constructs, and attrition factors.
4. Compare differences between novice and experienced teachers' perceptions of the factors which influenced their decision to leave the secondary agricultural education profession.
5. Describe the contributions of the four constructs of influence (e.g., compensation, working conditions, teacher development, and personal factors) on teachers' decision to leave the secondary agricultural education profession.

Methods

The target population of this study was all Illinois Agricultural Educators who left the teaching profession between 2008 and 2017. The names and contact information for participants were provided by Facilitating Coordination in Agricultural Education (FCAE) Program Advisors in Illinois and through the Illinois Association of Vocational Agriculture Teachers (IAVAT) online directory. Of the agricultural educators who left the profession ($N = 186$), investigators identified 155 possible respondents for inclusion in this study due to the accessibility of their current contact information.

A survey instrument was developed consisting of four sections to address the five research objectives. Attrition factors, derived from the four constructs of influence within the conceptual framework, were separated into impact items ($n = 24$) or affective items ($n = 19$) to improve the functionality of the instrument. Section one and two of the instrument utilized a 5-point Likert-type scale to measure the influence of these two items. Section three consisted of several open-ended questions relating to the decision to leave, while section four gathered demographic data (Refer to Appendix B for the survey instrument).

A panel of experts within agricultural education reviewed the instrument for face and content validity. After modifications were made to the instrument and the investigators received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix A), the instrument was pilot tested with former agricultural education teachers in Missouri ($N = 20$) who were teaching between August 2007 and May 2012. Cronbach's alpha estimates of internal consistency were calculated for reliability of the four constructs on the pilot study instrument revealing an $\alpha = .85$ for personal factors, $\alpha = .71$ for compensation, $\alpha = .72$ for teacher

development factors, and $\alpha = .73$ for working condition variables. Reliability estimates from the pilot test indicated “acceptable” internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978).

Researchers used features of Qualtrics, an online data collection service, to distribute the survey instrument and to collect responses. The solicitation process was guided by recommendations from Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2014). In an attempt to collect as many responses as possible, an email invitation was sent to all potential participants, with three reminder emails, and one personal phone call over the two-week data collection period. A response rate of 58.71% was achieved ($n = 91$). Non-response error was addressed by comparing early and late respondents (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). Researchers compared the mean impact and affective factor responses from early and late respondents, which indicated no significant differences ($p < .05$) between groups.

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program version 24.0. Prior to running statistical tests, reverse coding was completed for three impact variables to accommodate for a change in positive or negative perceptions of impact. The three variables reverse coded were items related to teachers’ perception of (a) confidence to teach curriculum; (b) confidence in the ability to teach students; and (c) ability to feel “caught up” with responsibilities.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for objectives one and two. Moreover, to determine the effect of the four constructs of influence both impact and affective factors were repackaged into the four constructs for analysis to further address these and subsequent objectives. Researchers used Pearson product-moment correlation for objective three, utilizing Davis’s (1971) conventions for strength and direction. Next, independent samples t-test analysis to compare differences between novice and experienced teachers’ perceptions of

factors, which influenced their decision to leave teaching, was deemed appropriate to address objective four. For methodological purposes, novice teachers were those reporting five or fewer years of experience, while both mid-career and late-career teachers comprised the experienced teacher group (six years or more). Finally, the research team used hierarchical forced entry multiple linear regression for objective five to predict the contributions of the four constructs of influence on a teacher's final decision to leave the classroom. A significance level of .05 was set *a priori*.

Results

Objective 1

For objective one, descriptive statistics were calculated to describe the personal and professional characteristics of Illinois Agricultural Educators who chose to leave the profession. The entire sample ($n = 91$, 100%) identified as white (non-Hispanic) in regards to ethnicity. Among the respondents, 40.7% ($n = 37$) were less than 30 years of age, 41.8% ($n = 38$) were between 30-39, 10.9% ($n = 10$) were between 40-49, and 4.4% ($n = 4$) were more than 50 years of age. Two respondents (2.2%) did not disclose their age. The average age of respondents was calculated at 32.6 years. Respondents also identified themselves as 56% ($n = 51$) male and 44.0% ($n = 40$) female. The majority of respondents completed a fully state certified teacher licensure program ($n = 73$, 80.2%), and the remaining 19.8% ($n = 18$) were provisionally licensed educators.

Among the respondents, 47.3% ($n = 43$) completed requirements to earn an advanced academic degree (e.g., Master of Science or Doctor of Philosophy). The majority (76.9%, $n = 70$) were employed as the only (i.e., single) teacher in the agricultural education department at their school, with 18.7% ($n = 17$) being in a two-teacher department, and only 4.4% ($n = 4$)

working in a multi-teacher department. The self-reported average yearly salary for respondents was \$48,481 (adjusted for inflation to 2017 dollars), which is 10.1 % less than their current average salary of \$53,951. A majority of former teachers ($n = 61$, 67.0%) indicated receiving an extended contract, with 30.8% ($n = 28$) not receiving an extended contract, and 2.2% not responding ($n = 2$). The respondents overall indicated they believed leaving the profession was the right decision ($n = 56$, 61.5%), with approximately one-third of the former teachers indicating uncertainty about the decision to leave was the right one for them ($n = 33$, 36.3%). Table 1 includes additional personal and professional characteristics not previously described.

Table 1

Selected Personal and Professional Characteristics of Former Illinois Agricultural Educators 2007-2017 (n=91)

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Years of Experience (Professional Life Cycle)		
Novice (5 or fewer years)	45	49.5%
Mid-Career (6-15 years)	39	42.8%
Late-Career (16+ years)	7	7.7%
Average Number of Years in the Classroom	~ 7 years (6.9)	
Frequency of Considering Leaving the Profession During Final Year		
Never	13	14.3%
Rarely	20	22.0%
Occasionally	36	39.6%
Frequently	19	20.9%
Almost Always	2	2.2%
Did not respond	1	1.0%
Leaving the Profession was the Right Decision		
Yes	56	61.5%
No	2	2.2%
Undecided	33	36.3%

Objective 2

The intent of objective two was to describe the factors impacting teachers' final decision to leave the secondary agricultural education profession. Respondents were asked to

rate each variable on a scale of 1 to 5 reflecting the degree to which they felt the variable impacted their decision to leave, with 1 being *did not impact* and 5 being *strongly impacted*.

Within the four constructs of agricultural teacher attrition/retention, respondents reported that the greatest influence on their decision to leave the classroom were *personal factors* ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 0.69$), closely followed by *teacher development factors* ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 0.68$). The least degree of influence was perceived by teachers in the area of *compensation* ($M = 1.93$, $SD = 0.84$). Table 2 provides the means and standard deviations of the constructs of influence.

Table 2

Agricultural Teacher Attrition Constructs of Influence and Their Impact on Illinois Agricultural Educators' Final Decision to Leave the Secondary Agricultural Education Profession. (n=91)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Personal Factors	2.55	0.69
Teacher Development Factors	2.52	0.68
Working Conditions	2.09	0.67
Compensation	1.93	0.84

Note. Based upon a 5-point Likert-type scale with impact increasing as values increase.

Furthermore, the researchers sought to identify which individual variables, within the constructs, had the greatest impact on former teachers' decision to leave the classroom. The top 10 of 24 impact factors are detailed in Table 3. Assessment of the individual factors revealed that teachers perceived the greatest degrees of influence from *family and personal reasons* ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.72$) and *out-of-classroom expectations* ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.56$). Conversely, the least degree of influence toward teachers' reasons to leave were the *quality of facilities* ($M = 1.64$, $SD = 1.18$) and their *student teaching experience* ($M = 1.12$, $SD = 0.55$). Factors not listed in Table 3, falling below the top 10 reasons in descending order

included: pressure to meet expectations of parents, classroom climate, interactions with parents, pressure to maintain level of program success, the district superintendent, FFA stipend, level of personal accomplishment, pressure to meet expectations of administrators, extended contracts, pressure to meet expectations of other FFA advisors, feelings of emotional instability, lack of instructional resources, quality of facilities, and their student teaching experience.

Table 3

Top Ten Specific Variables Which Impact Illinois Agricultural Educators' Final Decision to Leave the Secondary Agricultural Education Profession. (n=91)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Family or Personal Reasons	3.33	1.72
Out-of-Classroom Expectations	3.25	1.56
School Environment	2.82	1.61
Student Motivation	2.73	1.51
Pressure to Meet Personal Expectations	2.70	1.58
Salary	2.68	1.59
Paperwork	2.64	1.48
Student Behavior/ Discipline Problems	2.63	1.48
School Building Principal	2.49	1.74
School Board	2.45	1.72

Note. 5-point Likert-type scale with 1= *Did not Impact*, 2= *Slightly Impacted*, 3= *Somewhat Impacted*, 4= *Moderately Impacted*, and 5= *Strongly Impacted*.

Additionally, the researchers determined the leading affective variables influencing the final decision to leave secondary agricultural education during the final year of teaching (Table 4). Respondents self-reported the greatest frequency of behaviors, attitudes, and feelings experienced with a *lack of confidence to teach the curriculum* ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.46$) and an *inability to feel "caught up" with responsibilities* ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.08$). The least frequent of the affective variables reported by respondents were *negativity towards other agriculture teachers* ($M = 1.76$, $SD = 0.95$) and *concerns about their health* ($M = 1.56$, $SD =$

0.93). Affective variables not listed in Table 4, falling below the top 10 reasons in descending order included: negativity towards students, negativity towards parents, lack of personal accomplishment, uncomfortable preparing students for FFA competitions, negative self-reflection, inability to complete tasks, negativity towards the community, negativity towards other agriculture teachers, and concerns about their health.

Table 4

Top Ten Behaviors, Attitudes, or Feelings Felt the Final Year in the Profession (n=91)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Lack of Confidence to Teach the Curriculum	3.26	1.46
Inability to Feel “Caught up” with Responsibilities	3.26	1.08
Feelings of Guilt for Time Spent Away from Family	3.14	1.21
Stress or Anxiety	3.13	1.17
Lack of Confidence in Ability to Teach Students	3.07	1.46
Mental Exhaustion	2.84	1.16
Emotional Exhaustion	2.80	1.21
Physical Exhaustion	2.63	1.15
Negativity Towards Administration	2.58	1.26
Negativity Towards the Profession	2.27	0.98

Note. 5-point Likert-type scale with 1= *Never*, 2= *Rarely*, 3= *Sometimes*, 4= *Most of the Time*, and 5= *Always*.

Objective 3

The purpose of objective three was to determine the relationship between teachers’ personal and professional characteristics, the four attrition/retention constructs, and specific items of influence. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated to determine relationships between factors. As shown in Table 5, a substantial, positive relationship existed between the *working conditions* construct and *personal factors* construct ($r = 0.65$). Moderate, positive relationships were found between the *working conditions* construct and the *teacher development* construct ($r = 0.37$), the *compensation* and *working conditions* constructs ($r = 0.35$), and the *teacher development* and *personal factors* constructs

($r = 0.35$). A positive, low correlation was found between the *teacher development* and *compensation* constructs ($r = 0.23$). A negative, low correlation was found between the *years of teacher experience* variable and the *compensation* construct ($r = -0.24$).

Table 5

Pearson Correlation Coefficients of Selected Personal and Professional Characteristics and the Four Constructs of Influence (n=91)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Working Conditions	-	.645*	.350*	.374*	-.083	-.048
2. Personal Factors		-	.193	.346*	-.095	-.020
3. Compensation			-	.253*	-.242*	.124
4. Teacher Development				-	-.140	.000
5. Years of Experience					-	.038
6. Age						-

Note. *Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

A more thorough analysis of individual variables and correlations revealed statistically significant relationships among several variables. The *frequency one considers leaving the profession* had a moderate, positive relationship with *out of classroom expectations* ($r = .34$) and *paperwork* ($r = .32$). The *frequency one considers leaving the profession* also had a low, positive relationship with the *level of personal accomplishment* ($r = .27$) and *lack of personal accomplishment* ($r = .29$). Additionally, a teacher's feelings of *negativity towards students* and 22 variables within each of the four constructs were significantly correlated at a 0.01 level (2-tailed). As such, teachers' *feelings of negativity towards students* showed positive relationships with feelings of *negativity toward parents* (r

= 0.597) and *lack of personal accomplishment* ($r = 0.490$). Twenty additional variables had a moderate, positive relationship with the *negativity towards students'* variable.

Objective 4

To compare differences between novice and experienced teachers' perceptions of the factors that influenced their decision to leave the classroom, investigators used an independent samples t-test calculation for objective four. For methodological purposes, participants were either classified as novice (Five or fewer years of experience) or experienced (more than five years). As shown in Table 6, a statistically significant difference was found between novice and experienced teachers in the *compensation* construct, $t(89) = 2.65, p = .01$. The difference between the two groups represents a medium effect size of .55 (Cohen's d).

Table 6

Agricultural Teacher Attrition Constructs of Influence and Differences Between Professional Career Stages (n=91)

Variable	Novice (n = 45)		Experienced (n =46)		t-test	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Personal Factors	2.63	.70	2.46	.68	1.18	.24
Teacher Development	2.61	.67	2.44	.70	1.16	.25
Working Conditions	2.20	.71	1.98	.62	1.56	.12
Compensation	2.16	.90	1.71	.73	2.65	.01*

Note. * Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

When comparing the various influences of teacher attrition between groups, seven significant differences were identified. As shown in Table 7, significant differences between novice and experienced teachers include *the FFA stipend* ($t(89) = 3.43, p = .001$) with a medium effect size of .71 (Cohen's d); the *quality of facilities* ($t(89)= 3.02, p = .003$) with a medium effect size of .63 (Cohen's d); *instructional resources* ($t(89)= 2.98, p = .004$) with a

medium effect size of .62 (Cohen's *d*); *stress levels* ($t(89)= 2.41, p = .018$) with a medium effect size of .50 (Cohen's *d*); *uncomfortable preparing students for FFA CDE's* ($t(89) = 2.35, p = .021$) with a small effect size of .49 (Cohen's *d*); *lack of personal accomplishment* ($t(89)= 2.06, p = .042$) with a small effect size of .43 (Cohen's *d*); and the *interactions with parents* ($t(89)= 2.02, p = .046$) with a small effect size of .43 (Cohen's *d*).

Table 7

Significant Agricultural Education Teacher Attrition Influences (by construct) and Differences Between Professional Career Stages (n=91)

Influences by Construct	Novice (n = 45)		Experienced (n =46)		t-test	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Personal Factors						
Stress	3.42	1.22	2.85	1.05	2.41	.018*
Lack of Personal Accomplishment	2.38	1.28	1.89	0.95	2.06	.042*
Teacher Development						
Uncomfortable Preparing students for FFA CDEs	2.24	1.09	1.78	0.76	2.35	.021*
Working Conditions						
Quality of Facilities	2.01	1.43	1.29	0.74	3.02	.003*
Instructional Resources	2.07	1.47	1.32	0.85	2.98	.004*
Interactions with Parents	2.72	1.55	2.10	1.36	2.02	.046*
Compensation						
FFA Stipend	2.63	1.66	1.64	1.04	3.43	.001*

Note. * Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed); 5-point Likert-type scale with 1= *Did not Impact* and 5= *Strongly Impacted* for Impact Variables and 1= *Never* and 5= *Always* for Affective Variables.

Objective 5

The researchers used objective five to describe the contributions of the four constructs of influence (e.g., compensation, working conditions, teacher development, and personal factors) on a teacher's decision to leave the secondary agricultural education profession. The outcome variable used in the regression was teachers' interpretation of whether they perceived their decision to leave the profession was the "right" decision. Covariates were

entered in the multiple linear regression model from least to most administratively controllable, beginning with demographic variables (Step 1), followed by the four constructs of influence (e.g., personal factors, working conditions, teacher development, and compensation) in Step 2. Finally, the three sub-scores for the personal factors construct (e.g., *psychological, health, family*) were added in Step 3 of the regression. Researchers chose to enter covariates in this sequence due to the unknown predictive power of the demographic variables and four constructs. The three sub-scores for the Personal Factors construct were added in the third step due to the apparent strength and generalizability of these factors as found in the analysis of objectives two, three, and four. As shown in Table 8, neither the model, $F(14, 76) = .681, p = .79$, nor the covariates were statistically significant ($p < .05$) predictors for a teacher's determination if leaving the profession was the right decision. Consequently, the researchers accepted the null hypothesis.

Table 8

Multiple Linear Regression Determining Predictors for a Teachers' Determination if Leaving the Profession was the Right Decision (n= 91)

Variable	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3			
	B	SEB	β	p^*	B	SEB	β	p^*	B	SEB	β	p^*
(Constant)	1.89	.74		.01	2.41	.90		.01	2.83	.95		.00
Age	.06	.15	.05	.66	.70	.15	.06	.64	.06	.15	.05	.68
License	.19	.26	.08	.48	.15	.28	.06	.60	.04	.29	.02	.89
Degree	-.12	.23	-	.69	-.16	.23	-.09	.49	-.21	.23	-.11	.38
Department	-.22	.23	-	.33	-.20	.23	-.10	.39	-.32	.24	-.16	.19
Year Left	-.36	.25	-	.15	-.34	.26	-.29	.19	-.32	.26	-.27	.22
Years of Exp.	.44	.40	.23	.28	.40	.41	.21	.34	.43	.41	.22	.31
Gender	-.03	.21	-	.88	.03	.23	.02	.88	.01	.23	.00	.97
Working Cond.					-.06	.22	-.04	.78	-.07	.24	-.05	.78
Personal Factors					-.20	.20	-.15	.32	-.77	1.06	-.56	.47
Compensation					.02	.15	.02	.88	.10	.15	.08	.53

Table 8 (continued)

Variable	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	<i>p</i> *	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	<i>p</i> *	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	<i>p</i> *
Teacher Develop					.04	.17	.03	.83	.03	.17	.02	.88
Psych. Factors									.32	.87	.24	.72
Health Factors									.37	.26	.33	.15
Family Factors									-.12	.12	-.15	.31
R^2		.047				.073				.112		
<i>Adjusted R</i> ²		-.034				-.056				-.052		
<i>F</i>		.581				.563				.681		
ΔR^2		.047				.026				.039		
ΔF		.581				.552				1.108		

Note. The dependent variable for the models is the mean score of a teacher's interpretation of whether or not leaving the profession was the right decision. Independent variables included demographics (i.e., personal and profession characteristics), mean scores for the four constructs of personal factors, working conditions, compensation, and teacher development, and mean sub-scores for the personal factors construct (e.g., psychological factors, health factors, and family factors); **p* < .05.

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors associated with former Illinois Agricultural Educators final decision to leave the profession. Previous studies have attempted to determine attrition factors within agricultural education (Bennett et al., 2002; Chenevey et al., 2008; Lemons et al., 2015; Murray et al., 2011; Rice et al., 2011; Sorensen et al., 2016b; Tippens et al., 2013; Torres et al., 2009; Walker, Garton, & Kitchel, 2004); however, very few have actually provided evidence from those who have already exited the profession. This study provided responses from ninety-one (*N*= 91) agricultural educators, who have left the profession within the last 10 years to help provide some clarification as to why agricultural educators leave the profession.

Research objective one sought to describe the personal and professional characteristics of Illinois Agricultural Educators who chose to leave the profession. Results

indicated former Illinois Agricultural Educators spend, on average, seven years in the classroom, with almost half (49.5%, $n = 45$) leaving the profession in less than five years. This finding is consistent with the literature suggesting the largest attrition group as early-career teachers (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; Ingersoll et al., 2014; Sutchter et al., 2016). Interestingly, the late-career teachers comprised the smallest group with 7.7% ($n = 7$), while mid-career teachers (those with 6-15 years of experience) comprised a higher than expected percentage with 42.8% ($n = 39$). This may suggest additional time and financial resources should be allocated towards retention efforts for mid-career teachers.

When reviewing additional personal and professional characteristics, several other factors were deemed noteworthy. Of the respondents, 56% ($n = 51$) identified as male and 44.0% ($n = 40$) as female. This is almost identical to current demographic information reported from Illinois Agricultural Education state staff, as 57% of Illinois Agricultural Educators are male and 43% female, respectively (Facilitating Coordination in Agricultural Education, 2017). The demographic consistency between the sample and the population eliminates the assumption that one gender leaves the profession at higher attrition rate than the other.

Moreover, when examining salary information, it was evident Illinois Agricultural Educators have the potential to increase their salaries as they exit the profession, with an average self-reported increase of 10.1% in their current positions. However, as the data revealed, compensation was reported as the least influential construct in our model. This demographic statistic, combined with the fact that approximately two-thirds (67%, $n = 61$) of participants were already receiving additional compensation through an extended contract, it is conceivable to believe the compensation construct is not as significant as once thought.

This is also inconsistent with the literature that suggested inadequate compensation as a leading factor in teacher attrition rates (Allen, 2005; Ingersoll, 2003; Sutchter et al., 2016). Additionally, the demographic data revealed more than one-third (36.3%, $n = 33$) were still indecisive about whether or not they made the right decision to leave the profession. This may suggest an opportunity for the profession to reacquire an influential number of former agricultural educators at some point in the future if their concerns are addressed. Additional research investigating these perceived concerns should be conducted.

Objective two was to identify factors impacting Illinois Agricultural Educators' final decision to leave the profession. Of the four constructs, *personal factors* were deemed the most influential construct, closely followed by *teacher development factors*, *working conditions*, and further down the list, *compensation*. While *family or personal reasons* was reported as the most significant influencer, it is interesting to note seven of the top 10 factors were from the *working conditions* category. This is consistent with literature suggesting poor working conditions as a prominent factor in the decision to leave the teaching profession (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Moreover, objective three determined the top affective factors associated within the model. These data provide a glimpse into the behaviors and attitudes former agricultural educators experienced their last year in the profession. The *lack of confidence to teach the curriculum* was the leading variable, with several factors coming from *personal factors*, *teacher development*, and *working condition* constructs.

After thorough examination of all attrition factors, it is evident several variables have the ability to be influenced. While *family or personal reasons* are often perceived as a variable outside of profession's control, many of those issues stem from the lack of work-life balance. This is often due to the *out-of-classroom expectations*, also a leading attrition factor

in this study. This is supported by the literature indicating agricultural educators work well beyond the 40-hour work week and often struggle to balance their personal and professional time (Hainline et al. 2015; Lambert et al., 2011; Murray et al., 2011; Sorensen et al. 2016a; Torres et al., 2008). It is plausible to consider that attrition rates would decline if those in the profession (i.e., Agricultural Education State Staff, CTE Directors, Administrators) made a conscious effort to either (1) decrease the expectations placed upon its teachers or (2) provide them with additional help/resources to manage the excessive workload.

National and state agricultural education staff must be mindful of expectations (evening/weekend events, additional paperwork, etc.) they are placing upon their teachers, specifically novice teachers who have not developed techniques to deal with the stressors of the job and/or achieving a work-life balance. Furthermore, as the *inability to feel caught up* was identified as a top attrition factor, and more than three-quarters (76.9%, $n = 70$) of those leaving the profession were last employed within a single-teacher department, providing additional assistance for those teachers is essential. Support groups, such as the local FFA alumni or advisory council, could provide some assistance in these areas; however, hiring additional help may prove to be the best course of action. Boone and Boone (2009) suggested agricultural educators may have an easier ability to balance their home life with work when employed within a multi-teacher department. Creation of additional multi-teacher agricultural departments, or at minimum hiring an assistant FFA advisor, may help increase the retention rates in the profession, as the excessive work load could be distributed among various people within the program.

Moreover, *lack of confidence to teach the curriculum* and the *ability to teach students* could be improved through purposeful modification to existing teacher preparation programs

and additional professional development opportunities for pre-service teachers. Additional research identifying specific pedagogical or agricultural content knowledge gaps should be conducted to provide direction for additional coursework or professional development opportunities.

Objective three sought to determine if a relationship existed among the participant personal and professional characteristics, four attrition/retention constructs, and various items of influence. Moderate to substantially strong relationships were reported among all constructs, except *personal factors* with *compensation*. This provides some validity within the conceptual model that items are significantly related, excluding the relationship between the two previously mentioned. When examining attrition factors with the *frequency one considers leaving the profession*, several items proved to have a moderate correlation, including *out of classroom expectations* and *paperwork*. This finding helps confirm the previous statement warning about the amount of additional expectations, the profession, puts upon its teachers. Furthermore, the significant correlations among *negativity towards students* and 22 other attrition influences, bear further investigation to determine directionality of relationships.

Data reported from objective four revealed differences among teachers across the professional life span (novice or experienced). When examining the four constructs, only *compensation* proved to be a significant variable between novice and experienced teachers. The data reveal that novice teachers find elements within the *compensation* construct as more important than the veteran teachers. This could be explained by the fact that the experienced teachers are less concerned about money because they would typically be higher on the salary schedule, due to additional years of experience. Other significant differences between

novice and experienced teachers revealed that novice teachers have higher levels of *stress*, feelings of *lack of personal accomplishment*, are *uncomfortable preparing students for CDEs*, and are concerned more about the *quality of facilities*, *lack of instructional resources*, *interactions with parents*, and the lack of a *FFA stipend*. This may suggest some specific focus areas for professional development in this demographic.

Finally, objective five was used to determine the contribution toward the four constructs of influence. Through a multiple regression analysis, researchers determined that the conceptual model and the four constructs of influence utilized for this study were not a significant predictor for determining if leaving the profession was the correct decision. This may be due to the large number of former agriculture teachers (36.3%, $n = 33$) still uncertain if they made the right choice.

Further research examining the perceptions of these indecisive former agricultural educators is recommended. Additionally, relevant qualitative research should be conducted investigating potential factors that would influence a current agricultural educator to stay and a former agricultural educator to return to the profession.

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CHAPTER V**RETAINING AGRICULTURAL EDUCATORS IN ILLINOIS**

A paper prepared for submission to the *Journal of Agricultural Education*
Jay K. Solomonson, Michael S. Retallick,
Erica B. Thieman, and Debra S. Korte

Introduction

Recent reports acknowledge the United States recurrent struggle to keep educators in the teaching profession. Approximately half a million teachers move or leave the profession each year (Haynes, 2014) with an estimated 41% of all educators leaving within the first five years (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). This is a huge problem financially, as it costs the United States up to \$2.2 billion annually in attrition costs (Haynes, 2014). Furthermore, it negatively affects student achievement when quality teachers leave the profession (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2012). Research has recognized good teachers as a leading, influential factor impacting student success during a student's formal education (Alegreto, Corcoran, & Mishel, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Sanders & Rivers, 1998; Stronge, 2007). Due to these factors, it is essential good educators are kept in the teaching profession.

The field of agricultural education is of particular concern, as there is also a national shortage of highly qualified teachers. According to the recent Executive Summary of the National Agricultural Education Supply and Demand Study, agricultural teacher preparation programs are not producing enough graduates to meet current demands (Smith, Lawver, & Foster, 2017). Smith et al. (2017) reported 1,476 agricultural teacher vacancies existed in 2016. However, only 772 individuals completed an approved teacher preparation program to become fully licensed. Consequently, 66 full-time positions remain unfilled even after

positions were staffed by alternatively certified individuals ($n = 245$, 16.6%) or those not even certified to teach ($n = 80$, 5.4%) (Smith et al., 2017).

The state of Illinois is no exception. In 2013, Illinois had 57 statewide openings for agricultural educators, while only having 11 individuals completing an agricultural education teacher certification program (Facilitating Coordination in Agricultural Education, 2014). Of those individuals, only six decided to teach secondary agricultural education. Additionally, as many school districts struggle to fill these positions, others are forced to shut down their agriculture programs completely due to inadequate staffing. Research suggests teacher attrition as the predominant factor behind the ongoing teacher shortage (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016).

To address the issue, researchers must identify why agricultural educators are leaving the profession. The literature reveals agricultural educators are predominately satisfied with their careers (Blackburn, Bunch, & Haynes, 2017; Blackburn & Robinson, 2008; Cano & Miller, 1992; Castillo & Cano, 1999; Chenevey, Ewing, & Whittington, 2008; Gilman, Peake, & Parr, 2012; Kitchel et al., 2012; Sorensen & McKim, 2014; Sorensen, McKim, & Velez, 2016; Walker, Garton, & Kitchel, 2004). However, they ultimately chose to leave the profession for one or more specific factors. Several studies have been conducted examining these attrition factors within agricultural education; however, much of the research investigated the perceptions of those teachers still in the profession, with a limited number examining former teachers that have already left the profession. Moreover, there were no studies found that provided insight by leavers on what can be done as a profession to resolve the teacher attrition problem.

Literature Review

Kantrovich (2010) indicated the teacher shortage in school-based agricultural education (SBAE) is not necessarily a new phenomenon and has been present for at least the last four decades. Many studies have been conducted focusing on the agriculture teacher shortage and retention/attrition issue in the United States. Much of the previous research has attempted to identify problems agricultural educators encounter that contribute to the various reasons one might leave the profession; however, recent research has focused on career commitment and reasons agriculture teachers stay in the profession. The literature suggests that teachers' career satisfaction can be influenced by personal characteristics, educational preparation, the initial commitment to teaching, quality of the first teaching experience, external influences, and levels of social/professional integration into the education profession (Chapman, 1983).

Several studies have examined personal characteristics and their influences on teacher attrition in SBAE. Castillo and Cano (1999) reported gender disparities with specific facets of the job as females indicate lower levels of satisfaction with advancement, working conditions, supervision, and factors dealing with school policy and administration compared with their male counterparts. However, other studies indicated no significant differences between personal and professional characteristics of agricultural educators and the likelihood to remain in the profession (Gilman et al., 2012; Warnick, Thompson, & Tarpley, 2010). Furthermore, the amount and type of educational training have been shown to influence a teacher's decision to remain in the profession. Studies have determined that teachers with sufficient educational training are more likely to be retained than those with less training (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2014; Thobega & Miller, 2003). Robinson and

Edwards (2012) confirmed this statement by reporting those finishing a traditional certification program as more likely to stay in the profession than those completing an alternative certification program.

The agricultural education literature reveals career commitment as a strong predictor to remain in the teaching profession (Crutchfield et al., 2013, Sorensen & McKim, 2014). Studies also indicated a significant relationship between career commitment and self-efficacy, which has been proven to be correlated with high levels of career satisfaction (Blackburn and Robinson, 2008; Knobloch & Whittington, 2003; Swan, Wolf, & Cano, 2011). Furthermore, Wolf (2011) suggested new teachers having an excellent student teaching experience and first year teaching contribute to greater teacher retention. Haynes (2014) agreed by indicating that, “Retention is closely related to the quality of the first teaching experience” (p. 6).

External influences, including school climate and working conditions, have been proven to impact teachers’ decision to leave the profession. Sutchter et al. (2016) indicated that 55% of former teachers reported poor working conditions as a significant reason for their decision to leave the profession. Common problems related to working conditions include paperwork, excessive out-of-classroom expectations, poor student motivation and discipline, lack of stakeholder support, and inadequate resources, facilities, and equipment (Boone & Boone, 2007, Boone & Boone, 2009; Rice, LaVergne, & Gartin, 2011). Additionally, factors related to professional and social integration contribute to overall career satisfaction. Chapman (1983) suggested, “The greater a teacher’s involvement in the professional aspect of his or her career and the more social ties that person has to others in the school, the more likely that teacher will remain employed” (p.45).

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used for this research was the teacher retention model developed by Chapman (1983). Chapman's model for teacher retention has a theoretical base in social learning theory wherein personal characteristics, learning experiences, and environmental determinants influence the psychological functioning of a teacher throughout their decision to persist in or leave the profession of teaching. Moreover, variables of career movement (Krumboltz, 1979) were also integrated into the model to broaden the scope of psychological factors which may have influenced teachers' retention and attrition decisions. Along with social learning theory, Chapman (1984) suggested that genetic factors, cognitive and emotional responses relative to career satisfaction, and the perception of performance skills from early teaching experiences also contributed to a teacher's career decision to remain in or leave teaching (Figure 1). Researchers utilized the influences identified in the teacher retention model during the design, question development, and data interpretation phases of this study.

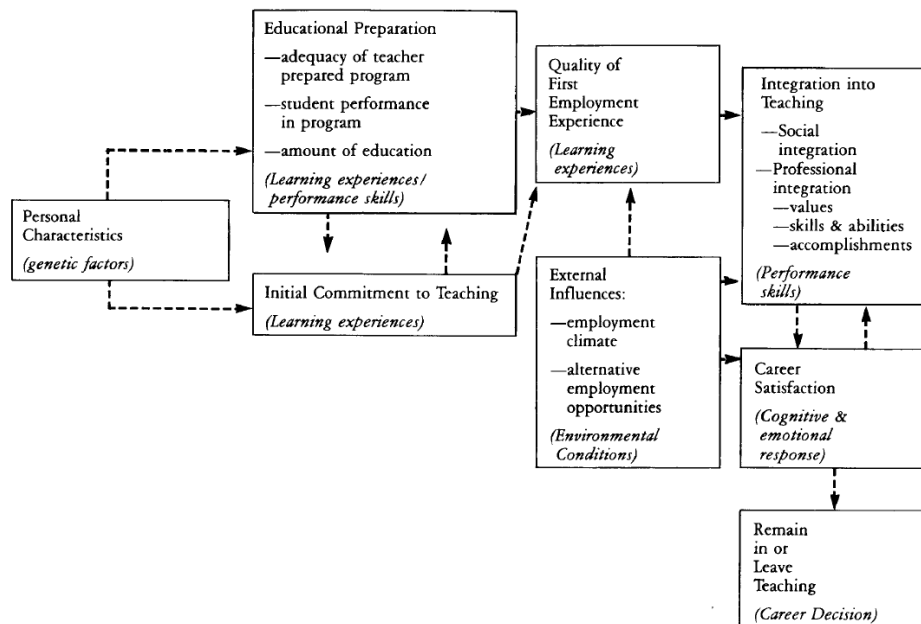


Figure 1. A suggested model of the influences associated with teacher attrition. (Chapman, 1983, p. 47; Permission for Reprint in Appendix D)

Purpose and Objectives

This study aligns with the American Association for Agricultural Education (AAAE) National Research Agenda Research Priority 3 and specifically addresses the question, “What methods, models, and practices are effective in recruiting agricultural leadership, education, and communication practitioners and supporting their success at all stages of their careers?” (Stripling & Ricketts, 2016, p. 31).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify factors that would influence a current agricultural educator to stay in, and a former agricultural educator to return to, the profession. Specific research objectives included:

1. Describe the factors leading to becoming an agricultural educator.
2. Describe the leading factors contributing to former Illinois Agricultural Educators’ decision to leave the profession.
3. Describe changes perceived as necessary to improve retention rates of agricultural educators in Illinois.

Methodology

This qualitative study is part of an ongoing, longitudinal follow-up to quantitative questionnaires that were administered to 155 former Illinois Agricultural Educators who left the secondary agricultural education classroom between 2008 and 2017. The year 2008 was selected as the starting point because it was the first year of more detailed record keeping in Illinois of those teachers who were exiting the profession. The questionnaire yielded 91 respondents for a 58.71% response rate. Participants in the quantitative questionnaire were provided the option at the end of their responses to indicate if they would be interested in

being interviewed by phone as a follow-up. This study should not be generalized beyond the population of former teachers who participated in this study. However, it is believed that the findings may provide insights for Illinois teacher educators, agricultural education teacher leaders in Illinois, and state staff working with Illinois agricultural education.

Population and Sampling

A total of 17 former high school agricultural educators indicated in the quantitative study that they would be interested in participating in a follow-up interview. Two researchers conducted the interviews by phone or in-person with most interviews lasting about 30 minutes with field notes being developed while conducting the interviews. Demographic descriptions of each participant, along with the identifier that will be attached to their quotes in the findings section, are displayed in Table 1. In accordance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements (Appendix A), all identifying characteristics were removed. The majority of the participants were male ($n = 13$, 76.5%) and had obtained traditional licensure through a teacher licensure program at a university ($n = 15$, 88.2%). The majority of the participants left the profession within the first five years of teaching ($n = 10$, 58.8%) with a smaller proportion leaving after five years of service ($n = 7$, 41.2%).

Table 1

Demographic Summary of Study Participants (n = 17)

Participant Identifier	Gender	Number of Years Taught	Age When Teacher Left the Profession	Year Teacher Left the Profession	Type of Licensure
M1	Male	16	49	2012	Provisional
M2	Male	16	39	2017	Traditional
M3	Male	11	33	2016	Traditional
F1	Female	9	31	2017	Traditional
M4	Male	9	31	2012	Traditional
F2	Female	8.5	31	2018	Traditional
M5	Male	6	31	2010	Traditional
M6	Male	5	28	2015	Traditional
F3	Female	5	27	2017	Traditional
M7	Male	4	41	2017	Traditional
F4	Female	4	26	2017	Traditional
M8	Male	4	26	2014	Traditional
M9	Male	3	29	2011	Traditional
M10	Male	2.5	28	2015	Traditional
M11	Male	2	57	2017	Provisional
M12	Male	2	54	2017	Traditional
M13	Male	2	25	2016	Traditional

Data Handling

Demographic information for the participants was obtained from the quantitative questionnaires (Table 1). A semi-structured interview protocol with 10 questions was utilized with probing questions asked as needed for follow-up (Appendix B). Questions were asked to determine current employment, examine factors contributing to the decision to leave the profession, examine satisfaction with the decision to leave, and identify if there are changes the profession could make that would increase retention of secondary agricultural educators. Several former high school agricultural educators from Illinois were consulted to examine the validity of the semi-structured interview protocol. In the summer of 2017, digital audio recordings of the interviews were conducted during a two-week period, and were transcribed by a transcription service company (www.rev.com).

Prior to data analysis, researchers who were assigned to coding began with discussing the conceptual/theoretical frameworks and researcher worldviews to delineate the drive of the study. This drive was determined to be examining agricultural teacher attrition through the application of Chapman's (1983) framework of teacher retention. Audio transcriptions were coded for themes by research objective using the framework suggested by Chapman (1983) of factors contributing to teacher attrition. Initial coding of the data was completed independently by two researchers who reviewed transcripts, interviewer field notes, and short answer responses from the previously collected quantitative questionnaires (Creswell, 2007). The results of the initial coding were reconciled between the two researchers and then synthesized into emergent themes. These emergent themes were then merged into the final themes.

In addressing qualitative rigor and relevance, several methods were utilized based on the recommendations of Creswell (2007) and Lincoln and Guba (1985). Rigor was ensured through triangulation of data including multiple data sources. Data sources triangulated included: transcribed interviews, audio recordings of interviews, researcher field notes, and quantitative questionnaire data. Quantitative questionnaire data that were provided via open-ended response dialogue box was folded into the qualitative study to be considered for analysis. Confirmability and dependability were sought through member checking via a review of findings by participants. Consensual validation was established through the use of multiple researchers in the independent and then convergent coding process.

In qualitative research, it is important to disclose potential biases (Creswell, 2007). Researchers completing the coding for the study are both highly involved in secondary agricultural education. One researcher is a current doctoral candidate with 15 years of

experience as a high school agricultural teacher. The other researcher is a former high school agricultural teacher and is currently an agricultural education teacher educator who works with teacher preparation and also induction programming for novice teachers. As a result, researchers drew from prior experiences when developing concepts surrounding teacher retention and attrition.

Findings

Through the initial round of coding, 13 concepts emerged and were grouped into the final five themes across the objectives of the study. The emergent concepts elucidated the former teachers' emotions and events surrounding their decisions to both enter and leave the profession along with their perception of their preparation and effectiveness as agricultural educators. The concepts include: (1) importance of family, (2) personal goals and aspirations, (3) professional goals and aspirations, (4) preparedness for teaching, (5) effectiveness as a teacher, (6) youth experiences in agriculture, (7) need for support, (8) agriculture teacher as role model, (9) a calling to teach, (10) desire to influence youth, (11) need to positively impact society, (12) continued involvement in FFA activities, and (13) expectations.

Objective 1 Themes

Objective one sought to identify factors leading to one becoming an agricultural educator. Two themes were found to indicate experiences in youth were foundational in the decision to pursue a career in agricultural education.

1.1 Positive agriculture and FFA experiences in youth and a desire to continue that involvement can provide motivation to pursue a career in agricultural education

The first theme discusses the impact of early experiences in agriculture and their impact on the pursuit of a career in agricultural education. Previous experiences that were positive in agriculture at-large and also more specifically within 4-H and FFA were recounted by many participants when sharing the “why” of becoming an agricultural educator. One man who left after the fourth year of teaching (M7) shared,

I would say probably because of the fantastic experience I had as a high school student myself. I appreciated the opportunities that I was given from my high school ag teachers. Opportunities to travel and see different parts of the state and country that I had not been to before. The opportunity to go out and compete in events that I was able to experience some degree of success in.

Several former teachers described a very early calling to be a teacher, but it was through positive experiences in formal agricultural education programs that ultimately led to the decision to teach agriculture. One participant (F4) originally wanted to teach social studies, but her agricultural teacher encouraged her to get into agricultural education. Another individual (M9) described being recruited into the profession at the encouragement of agricultural educators,

I always wanted to teach. I thought I was going to teach in history or PE. But I got into high school and got involved in FFA. And I got some pretty good encouragement from folks who were [in the] teaching profession and basically said, "Hey, young man, we really need your ass over here in Ag Ed and how about you take a look at that?" And that turned [out to be] pretty solid advice, and I took them up on it, decided to become a major in Ag Ed... I haven't regretted it one bit.

Quite a few of the former teachers indicated their agriculture teacher specifically as being integral in changing their career path to that of education through being a positive role model. One woman (F2) described having an early calling to be a teacher, but through involvement in the agricultural program, switched her focus from elementary education to agricultural education,

I always knew I wanted to teach. Teaching was always a number one career choice before I even knew about ag education. Then I got into high school and had a fantastic ag teacher myself...Then I did my SAE on ag education and worked with my ag teacher all four years. By the time I graduated, I knew that it wasn't elementary school that I wanted to do, it was definitely high school ag education.

For some participants, there was not only a desire to influence youth positively and follow in the footsteps of their agriculture teachers, but they also expressed a desire to continue participation and involvement in the FFA and other agricultural education youth opportunities they enjoyed. One man (M4) directly indicated this wish of continued involvement, “It just seemed like a natural step and really peaked my interest as something that I'd like to do as far as teaching and staying involved with all the FFA activities...”

1.2 A desire to “pay forward” the positive experiences from involvement in agricultural education to positively influence society

This second theme delves into the prosocial behavior of providing positive experiences for others to impact broader society in a positive manner. Some participants

directly indicated an eagerness to “pay it forward” from the growth and positive experiences their high school agricultural program and/or teacher provided so that they could provide the same for other young people. One man (M1) indicated he, “Wanted to make a difference... and [Ag Education] had been an underlying passion of mine for quite some time.” A woman (F1) described this ambition succinctly, “I went into being an ag teacher because of the impact that my ag teachers had on me growing up as well as I really was involved...in 4-H growing up.” One of the men (M6) described how agricultural education wrapped up several of his passions, including coaching and agriculture,

I just always enjoyed being around younger people. I enjoyed coaching. I enjoyed talking to different people, interacting with them. So I just took the things that I really liked and enjoyed and tried to mold that into a career of some kind.

Former teachers, both men and women, expressed that their agriculture teacher was very important in their lives when they were in high school and the desire to have a similar relationship with future students. One man (M2) said, “Looking back, my ag teacher had such an influence on me. I was thinking about this the other day; I know when I had a graduation party one weekend that was one person I looked for to be there.” One of the women (F3) described her desire to “make a difference” through “reconnecting with people and developing solid relationships.”

Objective 2 Themes

The goal of our second objective was to describe the factors emphasized by former agricultural educators in their decision to leave the high school agriculture classroom. Two

themes were revealed that describe conflict arising from a few different courses including unrealized expectations and a value of excellence.

2.1 Unrealized expectations result in personal conflict when the idealized version of an agricultural education program is not fulfilled

All of the participants described a personal conflict arising at some point from various focus areas when intuitively perceived and often concretely expressed expectations from stakeholders contributed to a lack of autonomy. One woman (F1) describes these expectations placed upon her by both herself and others,

I really felt like I was pushed to do, and it was probably a personal drive but pushed to do so many community service activities and chapter activities, in addition to what's expected of you for the contest and specific as an FFA event.

One man (M3) described the overwhelming stress he experienced due to these expectations. He indicated, "It's just the overall mental drain of never leaving the job. You're always doing something." Another man (M5) described being expected to work on holidays by community members and simultaneously feeling obligated to serve the community even though it went against his wishes,

I had a lady call and asked if we can have a petting zoo set up all day on the Fourth of July for their little community...So even the Fourth of July, an Ag teacher is just expected by the community to... put a petting zoo on. And most of us Ag teachers want to serve, and you got to have that community presence.

The same male participant (M5) described the pressure, not always concretely expressed by others, but definitely felt by the teacher, to excel, "There was pressure to get proficiency awards, and do well at judging contests, and those types of things. Nothing directly, but it just ... You know, expectations. Get stuff in the paper. Those kinds of things." While a woman (F1) described a competitive environment with other teachers as being a key to the pressure felt, "...everything is a big competition with the other teachers." Another woman (F3) indicated a discomfort with some of the expectations put on her by others, "...have to deal with having a principal that wants you to do things that you don't feel comfortable with, or having parents that are upset with you about something that their kid is doing or not doing."

Within each of the former teacher's personal stories was an idealized version of the agricultural education profession and conflict often resulted when these unrealized expectations surfaced. A woman (F1) described this idealized professional image,

Me saying, "We need to do these activities. And we've got to do well on our POA. And we've got to do all of these things." And I kind of set our standards really high. And, no, I don't think it was anybody pushing me. If anything, they would have rather me done better in my classroom.

Almost all of the former teachers expressed a strong commitment to excellence, along with a strong discomfort for the areas in which they felt inadequate. One woman (F3) relayed that she never felt like she could manage to get ahead due to pressure to keep adding things to her plate,

I felt like by year five, I had finally gotten a handle on it. The thing that I did not have a handle on is, well every year, you're wanting to do more and more and more. And, it's hard to keep that pace for a long period of time. But, I guess, me as a person I just felt like I just needed to be the best I could be, and so I felt like I needed to keep adding those things on. And to keep being better and better, and so it kind of got, I think I just overwhelmed myself with the amount of things that I wanted to accomplish.

2.2 Belief that being an excellent agricultural educator and having a satisfying personal life are incompatible with each other

Nearly all of the men and women interviewed relayed they were highly involved in the home and raising of children, which often came in conflict with their job. The former teachers expressed challenges in achieving a satisfying balance of personal and professional investment and success. One man (M5) described comparing himself to his agricultural teacher, who he perceived to prioritize his career over his family,

I watched my Ag teacher...I watched him raise everybody else's kids, and make his kids sometimes feel like they were in the backseat, compared to his FFA kids. I can't let that happen to my own family...I don't know that it was that [dramatic]. You know, that family, his kids, are good, they're a real good family and everything. But you feel like you have to choose your school over your own family.

Other teachers described having difficulty in transitioning from the life of young, single teachers to that of teachers with partners and families. A woman described a shift in

her priorities after becoming a mother, “But when life starts happening, that's when you start realizing, I'm putting way too much time into this job that I shouldn't be.” Women were not alone in this shift of priorities and focus and even discomfort with the amount of time spent working once life circumstances changed to include a partner and children. One of the men (M4) described marriage and fatherhood as precipitating his first thoughts of leaving the profession, “I started thinking about leaving when we got married and had our first child. It just seemed like there was more and more commitments at home and it put a lot of strain on both sides.” Another of the male participants (M2) shared feeling resentment of the time he had to spend away from his family after getting married and having children,

But then after like year eight, I got married and had a family, then it got to the point to where I did not enjoy going to state convention anymore. I did not enjoy taking the bus trip to WLC. You know, just those things that I really enjoyed prior to a wife and kids, that I almost [now] despised going to it. I pretended I liked it, to the students, faculty, all of my Ag teacher friends. I pretended I like it. But deep down inside, I didn't. I was not happy.

One former male teacher (M6) described how in hindsight, his life in the corporate world is much more flexible than when he was a teacher, allowing him to fit life with his family and personal needs within his workday if needed. He seemingly described a perceived inflexibility of his workday as a teacher,

I remember there were times when I was teaching and coaching football, I could not find time to get a haircut. I couldn't find time to get my oil changed in my car. Teaching is such a rigorous schedule 'cause you're there from seven

in the morning till four thirty at night. If you have an FFA event or football practice, then you were there later. Now I just have more freedom to be like, "Hey, I'm getting my haircut at two o'clock in the afternoon today, and I won't be there." If I need to take time off of work to go do things with my family or whatever, my schedule's a lot more flexible now than it was when I was teaching.

Objective 3 Theme

Through investigation of our third objective, the researchers sought to describe changes indicated by the former teachers as necessary to improve the retention of secondary agricultural educators in Illinois. One theme emerged that seemed to draw consensus among the former agricultural educators. All expressed a desire for some additional support, in addition to implying the current model utilized in Illinois as not sustainable for most in the profession.

3.1 Increased support for all teachers alongside a philosophical shift toward a more sustainable model and system of agricultural education statewide is necessary for teacher retention

The word "support" surfaced quite often when the former teachers described why they left and also what needs to be changed to retain more teachers. While support was a commonly indicated need, exactly what type of support was needed varied. One man (M10) indicated he needed more prep time. He indicated, "A lot of what I did during my planning periods, wasn't planning... it was cleaning up from the last class and getting things ready for

the next class... it wasn't time to sit down and work on lesson plans." One woman (F1) discussed the need for better curriculum and expressing how overwhelming it was to create new content and trying to make her lessons more engaging. She indicated, "I was spending all of my time preparing new lessons and making lessons better ... you don't realize how much extra work you added to your plate." One man (M13) noted a desire for stronger support within his school. He implied his administration "wouldn't follow through with anything" and would often cave when confronted by parents. Another woman (F3) described a similar need for more support from administration specifically related to student behavior,

Another factor of leaving was the administration, I just feel like I wasn't supported when it came to discipline. It was kind of like you've got to deal with your own stuff, and I didn't have a hammer, and I felt like there was always a culture that I wasn't able to change that was like, this is the place for you, but look around. And inside too, incidents in the shop, and discipline issues that I did not enjoy dealing with.

One man (M2) revealed the high probability he would have never left the profession if he had additional assistance with his agricultural program and FFA chapter the last few years. He indicated that if he had been employed within a multiple teacher program, he would have probably never left the profession,

I felt that [teaching was only] a part-time job and then the other... was preparing all the activities, all the paperwork, getting the school buses lined out, talking to the athletic director, all the FFA contests, the practices. I think if you could get help somehow... I know there's probably people leave that

have two teacher programs too. But I just think if it's a one teacher and you're all in, it's tough to balance everything. It was for me, obviously.

Furthermore, many of the former teachers described a need for a philosophical change of expectations of teachers within the Illinois agricultural education community. Many of the participants indicated that reducing the number of FFA events that are held outside of the normal school day would be most beneficial. Some, such as the woman (F2) featured in the following quote, described a reduction of the number of days FFA events are held as being a necessity, "I do think it can be helpful trying to minimize the amount of days the teachers are having to go to events." One of the men (M2) relayed how it seemed that more events were added to the list on a continual basis, with few ever being taken away resulting in a burgeoning calendar of events,

I created my own monster there, and the national FFA has created their own monster. We just keep adding things and not taking away anything. Because we don't wanna take away anything either. We like everything. But we just keep adding contests, adding opportunities for kids, which is great, but you're adding stuff to your plate, and there's only so many minutes and hours in a day for one person.

One former teacher (M9) provided the following advice, "I think culturally we're going to have to get to a position to where we really say, you don't have to do everything. Right? You can concentrate on just a few things and still be amazing." Moreover, several teachers suggested revamping the mentoring program and increasing professional development opportunities focusing on prioritization and time management strategies to help increase retention rates in the state.

Additionally, several former teachers commended the efforts of Illinois Agricultural Education and recognized the current state model has potential for reform to increase the retention rate. However, many admit a philosophical shift, deemphasizing the perception that agricultural educators need to do everything to have a quality program, will need to occur to ensure this happens. One teacher (M8) summed it up by indicating, “We've got a [good model] in Illinois... it's just a matter of restructuring it. We've got the support, institutionally. It's just not in the right shape right now.”

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify factors that would influence a current agricultural educator to stay in and a former agricultural educator to return to the profession. Several studies have attempted to determine retention/attrition factors within agricultural education (Chenevey et al., 2008; Lemons, Brashears, Burris, Meyers, & Price, 2015; Murray, Flowers, Croom, & Wilson, 2011; Rice et al., 2011; Tippens, Ricketts, Morgan, Novarro, & Flanders, 2013; Torres, Lawver, & Lambert, 2008; Walker et al., 2004), though few have exclusively investigated perceptions of former teachers. Researchers in this study conducted personal interviews with 17 former agricultural educators, who left the profession between 2008 and 2017, to collect rich, descriptive data examining retention and attrition variables within agricultural education.

Objective one assisted researchers with determining initial reasons one enters the agricultural education teaching profession. The data revealed that agriculture teachers travel a variety of paths which all led into the secondary classroom. Most completed an agricultural education teacher preparation program and were traditionally-certified ($n = 15$, 88.2%) and

two ($n = 2$, 11.8%) received an alternative licensure. Both alternatively-certified individuals worked within industry before entering their classrooms. Moreover, several traditionally-certified individuals discussed how agricultural education was not necessarily their first career choice, but through encouragement by key, influential people in their lives, they decided to pursue a career in the profession. Interestingly, most of these former teachers came from well-established high school agricultural education programs. Many divulged an idealistic high school agricultural and FFA experience, which inspired them to enter the profession. Additionally, due to those positive experiences, many felt a need to “give back” to the profession that provided them so much. Components of the themes from objective one, including a passion for agricultural education and FFA, were identified as reasons one enters the profession, have been observed in the current literature (Lemons et al., 2015).

Furthermore, one must consider if these former teachers had unrealistic expectations when accepting their first teaching position. Only having been exposed to outstanding programs with veteran teachers it is plausible to believe these former teachers became easily frustrated when they could not recreate the idealized image they had once experienced. This mirrors components of Chapman's (1983) model suggesting the quality of the first teaching experience and professional and social integration in the profession as key influencers in the decision to remain in or leave the profession. Moreover, it is often the practice of teacher education programs to desire their preservice teachers only to observe the more experienced and outstanding teachers in the field. This seems to be contributing to a highly unrealistic idealized version of what a novice teacher will look like in the classroom and be able to accomplish as an FFA advisor. According to the literature, these unrealized expectations may lead to symptoms of depression (Reynolds & Baird, 2010) throughout a career, which may

contribute to novice teachers leaving the profession. Teacher preparation programs should be cautious when allowing pre-service teachers to only visit exemplary agricultural education programs with established teachers. It is recommended that younger, less experienced teachers should be observed by future teachers, in addition to experienced teachers, so they can see real-life examples of novice teachers which will hopefully help them build a more realistic vision and expectations for who they will be as beginning teachers.

To ascertain leading factors contributing to former agricultural educators' decision to leave the profession, objective two data revealed themes stemming from unrealized expectations and the belief that being an excellent agricultural educator is incompatible with a satisfying personal life. Several former teachers discussed the pressure they felt to do more out of the classroom. Interestingly, many admitted their personality and personal drive was the primary influencer, and they were rarely pressured by external stakeholders to take on these additional tasks. Additionally, several former teachers disclosed they had a difficult time telling various stakeholders "no" when asked to participate in additional activities. This seemed increasingly difficult for those novice teachers stepping into a well-established program. Anecdotally, we often hear future and young teachers talking about "filling the shoes" of the former teacher, who may have been extremely seasoned and had many years to build the program. The profession needs to make a shift within teacher education and among teachers, in general, to change the conversation not to encourage novice teachers to fill anyone's shoes, but for novice teachers to build their programs slowly, so that they can achieve a more sustainable balance and allow for both prioritizations of professional and personal needs and goals.

Moreover, as the former teachers discussed these expectations, many disclosed the additional time needed to complete these activities were at the expense of their personal lives. The hours put in as an agricultural educator forced these former teachers to question the viability of their current position and reevaluate their career choice. The excessive hours and responsibilities beyond the school day have been a prevalent factor in an agricultural educators' struggle to attain a work-life balance (Hainline, Ulmer, Ritz, Burris, & Gibson, 2015; Lambert, Henry, & Tummons, 2011; Murray, Flowers, Croom, & Wilson, 2011; Sorensen et al. 2016; Torres et al., 2008). Interestingly, this factor was deemed extremely influential by both novice and experienced teachers. However, those individuals with young families indicated the excessive hours worked were the deciding factor in their decision to leave, and that they just wanted their time back.

To address objective three, researchers asked the former teachers for recommendations on fixing the teacher attrition problem. Each one indicated the need for some additional support alongside a philosophical shift in the profession that dictates "more is not always better." Many indicated a desire to work in a multi-teacher program to distribute the heavy workload. Others recommended engaging with various stakeholders (e.g., alumni, parents, advisory council, etc.) and requesting assistance from those groups. Overwhelmingly, they agreed the amount of time spent at work beyond the regular workday has to decrease for the job to be sustainable for most people, particularly those with young families.

Furthermore, several former teachers suggested a complete overhaul of the state's mentoring program, for both novice and mid-career agriculture educators. The former teachers also recommended increasing professional development opportunities on achieving

a work-life balance with a focus on prioritization and time management strategies. Specifically, one teacher disclosed the importance of differentiating professional development for various career stages, and to cater to the personal and professional needs for particular groups. Moreover, additional training and professional development for provisionally-licensed teachers was suggested to assist in making the transition into teaching secondary agricultural education. Full-disclosure of the job responsibilities to provisional teachers was also recommended to provide a more realistic view of the job they were taking on.

The researchers recommend that state agricultural education policymakers and other leaders in the profession be cognizant of the additional expectations and pressures they place on teachers. Modification of pertinent deadlines and consolidation of events should also be considered to reduce the number of events and activities outside of the normal school day, which will also reduce travel time and preparation for travel. Additionally, the researchers recommend continuing this longitudinal study by developing an exit survey for teachers leaving the profession. Yearly follow-ups with those individuals are suggested to determine if trends are maintaining or changing, requiring re-calibration for retention efforts. Furthermore, it is recommended this research be replicated in other states to identify similarities and differences of attrition factors.

The findings from this study will help to inform conversations at various levels within the state of Illinois related to teacher retention efforts. Using the findings from this study to guide policy and cultural change within Illinois Agricultural Education has the potential to help elicit changes that move the profession toward a more sustainable model that will

hopefully create a more attractive profession to young people as they consider their future careers.

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CHAPTER V

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to determine why agricultural educators are leaving the profession and identifying potential action steps to alleviate the problem. The study resulted in three journal articles that investigated factors influencing attrition and retention variables among current and former agricultural educators. The first journal article, chapter three, utilized mixed-methods to assess factors influencing current mid-career agricultural educators' decision to leave or stay in the teaching profession. The second journal article, chapter four, employed quantitative methods to investigate attrition factors of former Illinois Agricultural Educators. The final journal article, chapter five, was a qualitative study ascertaining factors, which may influence a current agricultural educator to stay in, or a former agricultural educator to return to, the profession. This chapter will provide general conclusions, implications, and recommendations attained from the three journal articles.

Conclusions and Implications

While several studies have determined potential attrition factors within agricultural education (Chenevey, Ewing, & Whittington, 2008; Lemons, Brashears, Burris, Meyers, & Price, 2015; Murray, Flowers, Croom, & Wilson, 2011; Rice, LaVergne, & Gartin, 2011; Tippens, Ricketts, Morgan, Novarro, & Flanders, 2013; Torres, Lawver, & Lambert, 2008; Walker, Garton, & Kitchel, 2004), very few have investigated those currently contemplating leaving or those who already left the profession. Furthermore, no literature exists exclusively

focusing on attrition factors within the various professional career stages (novice, mid-career, and late-career) of agricultural education. This study aimed to bridge that gap and determine attrition factors within several of these demographic groups.

When examining factors influencing current agricultural educators' decision to leave or stay in the profession, the researchers discovered mid-career agricultural educators are generally satisfied with their careers; and, levels of job satisfaction were not significantly different between those contemplating leaving and those planning on remaining in the profession. However, the data does indicate significant differences between potential leavers and stayers in the areas of job satisfaction related to the recognition they receive and issues with school policy and administration. Teachers exploring careers outside of agricultural education showed significantly lower mean scores in these two areas. This may suggest mid-career agricultural educators who feel underappreciated or who perceive low administrative support may be a higher attrition risk than those receiving sufficient recognition and support.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note the retention factors identified as influential for mid-career agricultural educators are similar to those for all agricultural educators. Working with motivated students, autonomy, variety, and support were frequently identified as reasons mid-career agricultural educators enjoyed their career. Moreover, a unique characteristic of this demographic group included an extreme pride in their programs and commitment to ensure it remains successful. This is likely due to the significant investment of non-monetary capital to their agricultural programs and FFA chapters. Grissmer and Kirby's (1987) Human Capital Theory supports this finding.

When examining reported attrition factors of mid-career agricultural educators, it was apparent those within this demographic struggle to balance their personal and professional

lives due to changing family dynamics. Interestingly, many of the mid-career agricultural educators facing these struggles were also experiencing tremendous successes within their agricultural programs; however, they were also becoming aware of the costs surrounding those successes. This supports Huberman's (1989) Teacher Life Cycle Model, which suggests mid-career teachers "take stock" in their past and future work. Additionally, one key finding in this study is mid-career agricultural educators value their time above compensation. While they acknowledge the importance of being adequately compensated for their time and effort, they indicated valuing their time more as a mid-career teacher. Many revealed making sufficient money at this point in their career, implying compensation was no longer a leading factor. Consequently, several confessed they would rather have their nights and weekends back over being compensated for additional hours beyond their contract.

When investigating factors related to former agricultural educators' decision to leave the profession, the researchers concluded that personal factors were deemed most influential in that decision. Specifically, family or personal reasons were reported as the most significant impact variable, both in the questionnaire and in the follow-up personal interviews. However, it is also noteworthy that several of the leading influencers were related to working conditions. Interestingly, the compensation construct was regarded as least influential in their decision to leave the profession. This is inconsistent with literature suggesting compensation as a teacher attrition leading factor (Allen, 2005; Boone & Boone, 2009; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Lemons et al., 2015; Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016; Warnick, Thompson, & Tarpley, 2010). Furthermore, the top affective factors were the lack of confidence to teach the curriculum and an inability to feel "caught up" with responsibilities. These insecurities could be addressed through purposeful modification to

existing teacher preparation programs and additional professional development opportunities for teachers. It is suggested to conduct a needs assessment with novice teachers to identify potential professional development topics based on perceived inadequacies.

Through personal interviews, several underlying attrition variables were also revealed stemming from unrealized expectations, and the belief of being an excellent agricultural educator is incompatible with a satisfying personal life. Most of these former teachers came from well-established high school agricultural education programs. Many revealed an idealistic high school agricultural and FFA experience, which inspired them to enter the profession. Additionally, due to those positive experiences as students, many felt a need to “give back” to the profession that provided them so much. One must consider if these former teachers had unrealistic expectations throughout their time in the profession. This supports components of Chapman's (1983) teacher attrition model suggesting the quality of the first teaching experience, and professional and social integration in the profession as key influencers in the decision to remain in or leave the profession. Furthermore, due to several novice teachers only having been exposed to outstanding programs with veteran teachers, it is plausible to believe these former teachers became easily frustrated when they couldn't recreate the idealized image they had once experienced. According to the literature, these unrealized expectations may lead to symptoms of depression (Reynolds & Baird, 2010) that could contribute to teachers leaving the profession. Teacher preparation programs should be cautious when allowing pre-service teachers only to visit exemplary agricultural education programs with established teachers as this may aid in these unrealistic expectations.

Several former teachers also discussed the pressures they felt to do more out-of-the-classroom activities. Many disclosed the additional time needed to complete these activities

were at the expense of their personal lives. The hours agricultural educators work, forced these former teachers to question the viability of their current position and reevaluate their career choice. Excessive hours and additional responsibilities have been a common factor in an agricultural educators' struggle to attain a work-life balance (Hainline, Ulmer, Ritz, Burris, & Gibson, 2015; Lambert, Henry, and Tummons, 2011; Murray et al., 2011; Sorensen, McKim, & Velez, 2016; Torres et al., 2008). Interestingly, this factor was deemed extremely influential by both novice and experienced teachers.

Furthermore, several other differences were deemed significant between novice and experienced teachers. When evaluating the attrition constructs, only compensation proved to be a significant factor between novice and experienced teachers. The data indicated that novice teachers find elements within the compensation construct as more influential than experienced teachers. This could be explained by the fact that the experienced teachers are less concerned about money as they would typically be higher on the salary schedule, due to additional years of experience. Other significant differences between novice and experienced teachers reveal novice teachers have higher levels of stress, feelings of lack of personal accomplishment, are uncomfortable preparing students for CDEs, and are concerned more about the quality of facilities, lack of instructional resources, interactions with parents, and the lack of a FFA stipend. This may suggest some specific focus areas for professional development for novice teachers. Workshops on managing stress, CDE team preparation, facility management, and curriculum development could assist in bridging this gap.

After examination of all identified attrition factors, it is evident that several variables can be influenced. While family or personal reasons are often perceived as a variable outside of profession's control, many of those issues stem from the lack of work-life balance. This is

often due to the out-of-classroom expectations, a leading attrition factor in this study. Researchers reported a moderate correlation between the frequency one considers leaving the profession and out-of-classroom expectations and paperwork. It is plausible to consider that attrition rates would decline if the profession made a conscious effort to either (1) decrease the expectations placed upon its teachers or (2) provide them with additional support to manage the excessive workload. Support groups, such as the local FFA alumni or advisory council, could provide some assistance in these areas; however, hiring additional help (another agricultural educator, assistant FFA advisor, etc.) may prove to be the best course of action. Overwhelmingly, the former teachers agreed the amount of time spent at work, beyond the regular workday, has to decrease for the job to be sustainable for most people, particularly those with young families.

Additionally, the researchers determined that more than one-third (36.3%, $n = 33$) of former agricultural educators were still indecisive about whether or not they made the right decision to leave the profession. This may suggest an opportunity for secondary agricultural programs to reacquire a substantial number of former teachers at some point in the future if these former teachers' concerns were addressed. It is the hope that findings from this study will help to inform conversations at various levels related to teacher retention efforts. Using the findings from this study to guide policy within agricultural education has the potential to help elicit changes that moves the profession toward a more sustainable model to create a more attractive profession for young people as they consider their future careers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher provides the following recommendations for the profession, teacher preparation programs, professional development, and future research.

Recommendations for the Profession:

1. As teacher recognition surfaced as a significant factor between mid-career agricultural educators contemplating leaving the profession and those not, a recommendation would be to evaluate local, state, regional, and national agricultural educator recognition programs to ensure ample opportunities for recognition at each professional career stage.
2. As several current and former agricultural educators reported a lack of support and program understanding by school administrators, a recommendation would be to develop a program for administrative preparation certification courses to share benefits, opportunities, and impact of agricultural education and FFA.
3. Examine current induction and mentoring opportunities available for agricultural educators. It is recommended a purposeful, comprehensive induction/mentoring program is implemented providing assistance for a minimum of two years, with an option to continue as needed, as suggested by Haynes (2014). Ideally, it should be available to teachers in all professional career stages.
4. Due to a large number of current and former teachers identifying excessive out-of-classroom expectations as a leading attrition factor, it is recommended that agricultural education state staff evaluate expectations they place upon teachers and

- limit them to only those deemed essential. Consolidation of activities and events, which would eliminate additional days away from home, should also be considered.
5. To increase support for the agricultural educator, it is recommended to policymakers to provide additional financial resources to school districts (or reallocate existing funds) to assist in paying for additional staff (additional agricultural educator, assistant FFA advisor, secretarial assistance, etc.) to support the local school-based agricultural education program in the form of grants.
 6. It is recommended that the profession provide additional opportunities to involve an agricultural educator's family at various agricultural education events. (e.g., incorporating a family component at state agricultural teacher conferences, FFA conventions, etc.)

Recommendations for Teacher Preparation Programs:

1. It is recommended to teacher preparation programs to incorporate a component within early-field experiences where pre-service teachers observe younger, less experienced teachers (in addition to the current practice of observing respected, well-established teachers). Having pre-service teachers observing real-life examples of novice teachers will hopefully help establish a more realistic vision and expectation for who they will be as beginning teachers.
2. Too often, young teachers allude to having to “fill the shoes” of the previous teacher. It is recommended that teacher educators stress to pre-service teachers that it is completely acceptable to take sufficient time to slowly build their agricultural program. This will provide an opportunity for novice teachers to achieve a more

sustainable balance allowing for both prioritizations of professional and personal goals.

Recommendations for Professional Development:

1. To include additional teachers', it is recommended that purposeful professional development, similar to the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) XLR8 program, be developed in states struggling with attrition issues.
2. It is recommended to increase professional development opportunities related to achieving a work-life balance with a focus on prioritization and time management strategies.
3. Professional development coordinators should consider providing differentiated professional development for agricultural educators in various career stages to better meet their needs. A needs assessment could determine topics within the various groups.
4. Additional professional development and training for provisionally-licensed teachers, focusing on pedagogy and classroom management, are suggested to assist in making a smoother transition into teaching secondary agricultural education. It is recommended this occur prior to the provisionally-licensed teacher's first day with students.

Recommendations for Future Research:

1. Further research investigating perceptions of mid-career agricultural educators and the level of recognition they currently receive and prefer are recommended.
2. Further research investigating retention rates in states that consolidate events and activities should be conducted.

3. It is recommended to conduct research investigating compensation within agricultural education, and examining teachers at various professional career stages.
4. Additional research identifying specific pedagogical or agricultural content knowledge gaps should be conducted to provide direction for additional coursework or professional development opportunities for teachers in each professional career stage.
5. Further research examining the perceptions of those former Illinois Agricultural Educators, still indecisive if they made the right decision leaving the profession, is recommended to determine the likelihood of returning to the profession and what factors are influencing that decision.
6. The researchers recommend continuing the longitudinal component of this study in Illinois by developing an exit survey for teachers leaving the profession with yearly follow-ups of leavers to determine if trends are maintaining or changing, requiring recalibration for state retention efforts.
7. It is recommended that this entire study is replicated in other states to gain a better understanding of factors related to agricultural teacher job satisfaction and attrition factors for all agricultural educators.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DOCUMENTATION

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board
Office for Responsible Research
Vice President for Research
2420 Lincoln Way, Suite 202
Ames, Iowa 50014
515 294-4566

Date: 11/18/2016

To: Jay Solomonson
14214 104th St.
Coal Valley, IL 61240

CC: Dr. Michael Retallick
206 Curtiss Hall
Dr. Scott Smalley
217C Curtiss Hall

From: Office for Responsible Research

Title: Over the Edge: Factors Nudging Mid-Career Agricultural Educators Out of the Profession.

IRB ID: 16-492

Study Review Date: 11/18/2016

The project referenced above has been declared exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b) because it meets the following federal requirements for exemption:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey or interview procedures with adults or observation of public behavior where
 - Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; or
 - Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could not reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, or reputation.

The determination of exemption means that:

- **You do not need to submit an application for annual continuing review.**
- **You must carry out the research as described in the IRB application.** Review by IRB staff is required prior to implementing modifications that may change the exempt status of the research. In general, review is required for any modifications to the research procedures (e.g., method of data collection, nature or scope of information to be collected, changes in confidentiality measures, etc.), modifications that result in the inclusion of participants from vulnerable populations, and/or any change that may increase the risk or discomfort to participants. Changes to key personnel must also be approved. The purpose of review is to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption.

Non-exempt research is subject to many regulatory requirements that must be addressed prior to implementation of the study. Conducting non-exempt research without IRB review and approval may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct according to ISU policy.

Detailed information about requirements for submission of modifications can be found on the Exempt Study Modification Form. A Personnel Change Form may be submitted when the only modification involves changes in study staff. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an Application for Approval of Research Involving Humans Form will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review. **Only the IRB or designees may make the determination of exemption**, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.

Please be aware that **approval from other entities may also be needed.** For example, access to data from private records (e.g. student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. **An IRB determination of exemption in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.**

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Office of Vice Chancellor for Research
Institutional Review Board
528 East Green Street
Suite 203
Champaign, IL 61820



March 10, 2014

Debra Korte
Agr & Consumer Economics
147 Bevier Hall
905 South Goodwin Avenue
UIUC Campus Mail,
M/C 180

RE: *Examining teacher attrition through former teachers who left the secondary agricultural education classroom*
IRB Protocol Number: 14573

EXPIRATION DATE: 03/09/2017

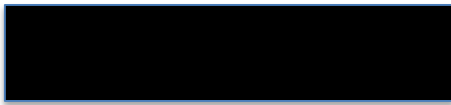
Dear Ms. Korte:

Thank you for submitting the completed IRB application form for your project entitled *Examining teacher attrition through former teachers who left the secondary agricultural education classroom*. Your project was assigned Institutional Review Board (IRB) Protocol Number 14573 and reviewed. It has been determined that the research activities described in this application meet the criteria for exemption at 45CFR46.101(b)(2).

This determination of exemption only applies to the research study as submitted. Please note that additional modifications to your project need to be submitted to the IRB for review and exemption determination or approval before the modifications are initiated.

We appreciate your conscientious adherence to the requirements of human subjects research. If you have any questions about the IRB process, or if you need assistance at any time, please feel free to contact me or the IRB Office, or visit our website at <http://www.irb.illinois.edu>.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Van Tine, MS
Assistant Human Subjects Research Specialist, Institutional Review Board

c: Erica Thieman
Kari Keating



**University of Illinois
at Urbana-Champaign**

Institutional Review Board Office
528 East Green Street, Suite 203, MC-419
Champaign, IL 61820
tel: 217-333-2670 fax: 217-333-0405
E-mail: irb@illinois.edu Web: www.irb.illinois.edu

CO-INVESTIGATORS & RESEARCH TEAM ATTACHMENT

RECEIVED

IRB Number 3673372 **14573**

JAN 20 2017

Responsible Project Investigator: Debra Korte

UIUC OPRS

Project Title:

Examining teacher attrition through former teachers who left the secondary agricultural education classroom

- Submitting with Initial IRB-1 Application
- Changing research team, date of submission 01/20/17

List all investigators engaged in the research study, including those from other institutions. Include all persons who will be 1) directly responsible for the project's design or implementation, 2) recruitment, 3) obtain informed consent, 4) involved in data collection, data analysis, or follow-up.

Collaborators, outside consultants, and all graduate and undergraduate students should be listed if they will be responsible for these activities. Include all investigators named on grant proposals who will be engaged in human subjects research.

Note: Changes made to the Responsible Project Investigator require a revised IRB-1 application and amendment form.

Please copy and paste text fields to add additional researcher team members.

Last Name: Thieman		First Name: Erica		Academic Degree(s): Ph.D.	
Dept. or Unit: Agricultural Education Program		Office Address: 139 Bevier Hall		Mail Code: 180	
Street Address: 905 South Goodwin Ave.		City: Urbana		State: IL	Zip Code: 61801
Phone: (217) 244-3863		Net ID: thieman		E-mail: thieman@illinois.edu	
Affiliation:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UIUC Faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Professional/Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Grad Student <input type="checkbox"/> Undergrad Student				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Visiting Scholar, or <input type="checkbox"/> Non-UIUC Affiliate of (Institution):				
Training	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CITI Training, Date of Completion, 01/20/2017				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Additional training, Date of Completion ¹ ,				
<input type="checkbox"/> Please check box if this individual should be copied on IRB correspondence					

¹ Additional CITI modules may be required depending on subject populations or types of research. These include: (i) research enrolling children; (ii) research enrolling prisoners; (iii) FDA regulated research; (iv) data collected via the internet; (v) research conducted in public elementary/secondary schools; and, (vi) researchers conducted in international sites

Last Name: Keating		First Name: Kari		Academic Degree(s): Ph.D.	
		Office Address: 174D Bevier Hall		Mail Code: 180	
Street Address: 905 South Goodwin Ave.		City: Urbana		State: IL	Zip Code: 61801
Phone: (217) 828-0064		Net ID: keatingk		E-mail: keatingk@illinois.edu	
Affiliation:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UIUC Faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Professional/Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Grad Student <input type="checkbox"/> Undergrad Student <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting Scholar, or <input type="checkbox"/> Non-UIUC Affiliate of (Institution):				
Training	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CITI Training, Date of Completion, 04/30/2014 <input type="checkbox"/> Additional training, Date of Completion,				
<input type="checkbox"/> Please check box if this individual should be copied on IRB correspondence					

Last Name: Solomonson		First Name: Jay		Academic Degree(s): M.S.	
Dept. or Unit: Agricultural Education & Studies		Office Address: N/A		Mail Code: N/A	
Street Address: 14214 104 th Street		City: Coal Valley		State: IL	Zip Code: 61240
Phone: 309-798-6571		Net ID: N/A		E-mail: jks1@iastate.edu	
Affiliation:	<input type="checkbox"/> UIUC Faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Professional/Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grad Student <input type="checkbox"/> Undergrad Student <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting Scholar, or <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-UIUC Affiliate of (Institution): Iowa State University				
Training	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CITI Training, Date of Completion, 07/08/2015 <input type="checkbox"/> Additional training, Date of Completion,				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Please check box if this individual should be copied on IRB correspondence					

INVESTIGATOR ASSURANCES

I certify that the information supplied on this form is complete and correct and that new members of the research team will not engage in research until IRB approval has been obtained.

Responsible Principal Investigator

01/20/2017

Date

**University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Institutional Review Board**
Approved: 02-22-2017
IRB #: 14573

**EMAIL VERIFICATION FOR IRB INSTITUTIONAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY AND THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS**

Kaatz, Sarah [VPR] <skaatz@iastate.edu>

Feb 22

to Michael, me, dskorte

Hi Dr. Retallick,

I wanted to touch base with you quickly regarding the institutional agreement/IRB authorization agreement I am working on for Jay Solomonson's collaborative project. What this means, in a nutshell, is that our IRB would not need to complete the review we have ongoing for his study, but rather, defer IRB oversight for the project to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's IRB. We do this all the time for collaborative work and our hope is that it makes collaborative projects easier to facilitate – no need to seek approval from two IRB's when one is sufficient!

Their IRB has gotten back to me and they are willing to serve as the IRB of record. The project has been reviewed by their IRB and determined to be an exempt study, which means some of the federal regulations for human subjects research do not apply. Therefore, their IRB does not require a formally executed institutional agreement – an email from me verifying I agree with the exempt determination is all that is required.

I have reviewed their documentation and agree with their determination, and am happy to send an email confirming this decision. However, when we enter into IRB authorization agreements, we are very hesitant to defer project oversight to another institution when our collaborating individual is a student – we typically add the supervising faculty member on the agreement. Therefore, I want to verify that you would be okay with me listing your name in the email as the faculty supervisor, rather than Jay being listed as the sole ISU collaborator.

Please let me know if this is acceptable.

Thank you,
Sarah

Sarah E. Kaatz

Director

Office for Responsible Research (ORR)

Iowa State University

2420 Lincoln Way, Suite 202

Ames, IA 50014

Phone: [\(515\)294-3115](tel:5152943115)

skaatz@iastate.edu

www.compliance.iastate.edu

Retallick, Michael S [AGEDS] <msr@iastate.edu>

Feb 22

to Sarah, me, dskorte

Hello Sarah,

Thank you for your work on this issue and for this clarifying email. I am willing to be listed as a collaborator on this project since I am serving as Jay's major professor and supervising his research here at ISU.

Again, thank you.

Mike

Michael S. Retallick, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair, Agricultural Education and Studies
Iowa State University

201 Curtiss Hall
Ames, IA 50011-1050

Voice: [515.294.4810](tel:515.294.4810)

Fax: [515.294.0530](tel:515.294.0530)

Web: <http://www.ageds.iastate.edu/people/michael-retallick>

From: Kaatz, Sarah [VPR]

Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2017 9:22 AM

To: Retallick, Michael S [AGEDS] <msr@iastate.edu>

Cc: Solomonson, Jay K [AGEDS] <jks1@iastate.edu>; dskorte@illinois.edu

Subject: Verification for IRB institutional agreement

Kaatz, Sarah [VPR] <skaatz@iastate.edu>

Mar 15

to IRB, Michael, me, dskorte

Good morning, Dr. Retallick,

I wanted to let you know that I have heard back from the Illinois IRB office confirming our reliance on their exempt oversight of Jay's project. This means that everything is in order and Jay may begin his research.

We will officially close his IRB application in our system and add the reliance emails to our records for this project.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Thanks,
Sarah

Sarah E. Kaatz

Director

Office for Responsible Research (ORR)

Iowa State University

2420 Lincoln Way, Suite 202

Ames, IA 50014

Phone: [\(515\)294-3115](tel:(515)294-3115)

skaatz@iastate.edu

www.compliance.iastate.edu

APPENDIX B**SURVEY INSTRUMENTS, CONSENT DOCUMENTS, & CORESPONDENCE****Over the Edge: Factors Nudging Mid-Career Agricultural Educators Out of the Profession****Agricultural Education Teacher Attrition and Retention Questionnaire***Consent to Participate*

Please read the consent statement carefully before you decide to participate in this study. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information about you and your experiences teaching in a secondary agricultural education program. The survey will have two parts. The initial questions will gather information related to your personal level of job satisfaction followed by questions to obtain demographic data. The results from this questionnaire will be used, in part, to address the issue of agriculture teacher retention and recruitment. As an important part of agricultural education, your insights about personal experiences are extremely valuable.

The study is being conducted by researchers at Iowa State University. The data collected from the study will be analyzed by researchers from this institution.

This research presents no more than a minimal risk of harm to subjects. Your decision to participate or decline participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to terminate your participation at any time without penalty. Only those 18 and older are invited to participate. If you do not wish to complete this survey or are under 18 years old, please close the webpage. Your participation in this research will be completely anonymous, and data will be averaged and reported in aggregate. You will not be asked to provide any personally-identifiable information. Possible outlets of dissemination of the results of this study may be publication in a journal and presentation at a conference.

At the conclusion of the survey, you will be asked if you would like to participate in a focus group or a personal interview to help further the study. If you choose to do so, you will click a link to a separate questionnaire where you can enter your contact information. This is done to keep your personally identifiable information separate from your questionnaire to protect confidentiality.

If you have questions about the questionnaire, please contact Jay Solomonson at either jks1@iastate.edu or (309) 798-6571 or Dr. Michael Retallick at mrsr@iastate.edu or at (515) 294-4810.

Please be completely honest with your opinions. This questionnaire should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study or any concerns or complaints, please contact the Iowa State University IRB Administrator at (515) 294-4556,

IRB@iastate.edu, or Director at (515) 294-3115, Office of Responsible Research, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011. Please print a copy of this consent form for your records.

Your decision to participate, decline, or withdraw from participation will have no effect on your current status or future relations with Iowa State University, NAAE, or the XLR8 program.

- I have read the procedure described above and am 18 years or older. I voluntarily agree to participate in this questionnaire. (1)
- I do not wish to participate in this questionnaire. (2)

Part I. Job Satisfaction *Level of Job Satisfaction*

Directions: For the following statements please respond by clicking on level of agreement.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Undecided (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
My job is like a hobby to me. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My job is usually interesting enough to keep me from getting bored. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It seems that my friends are more interested in their jobs. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I consider my job rather unpleasant. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy my work more than my leisure time. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am often bored with my job. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel fairly well-satisfied with my present job. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of the time I have to force myself to go to work. (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with my job for the time being. (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel my job is more interesting than others I could get. (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I definitely dislike my work. (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most days I am enthusiastic about my work. (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Each day of work seems like it will never end. (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel that I am happier in my work than most other people. (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like my job better than the average worker does. (15)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My job is pretty uninteresting. (16)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find real enjoyment in my work. (17)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am disappointed I took this job. (18)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am adequately paid for the job I do. (19)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My job has a fair (impartial) promotion policy. (20)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I could start over, I would choose the same career. (21)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

policy and administration? (7)						
Are you satisfied with your salary? (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you satisfied with your level of supervision in your job? (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you satisfied with the working conditions at your job? (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Part II. Demographic Data.

Directions. Please provide the following demographic data.

1. Age- _____

2. Gender

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

3. Years of Total Teaching Experience- _____

4. Type of Teaching Certification

- Traditional (went through a certified teacher education program) (1)
- Alternatively-certified (2)

5. Are you a CASE certified teacher?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

6. Highest Level of Education Completed

- Bachelor's Degree (1)
- Master's Degree (2)
- PhD or EdD Degree (3)

7. Characteristics of Community (population within the city or town or towns) in which you teach:

- Rural < 10,000 people (1)
- Suburban- Between 10,000-50,000 people (2)
- Urban- > than 50,000 people (3)

8. Size of the school in which you teach (in your building):

- Less than 250 students (1)
- 250-499 students (2)
- 500-749 students (3)
- 750-999 students (4)
- 1000-1249 students (5)
- 1250-1499 students (6)
- More than 1500 students (7)

9. Number of Students (duplicated- if you have a student more than once a day) you currently teach each day:

- 1-24 (1)
- 25-49 (2)
- 50-74 (3)
- 75-99 (4)
- 100-124 (5)
- 125-149 (6)
- More than 150 (7)

10. Marital Situation

- Single (1)
- Married (no children/ no children living at home) (2)
- Married (with children living at home) (3)
- Divorced/ Widowed (no children/ no children living at home) (4)
- Divorced/ Widowed (with children living at home) (5)

11. Have you looked at a job outside of teaching agricultural education in the past year?
(Click on all that apply.)

- I have looked at job postings outside of teaching agriculture. (1)
- I have applied for a job outside of teaching agriculture. (2)
- I have been formally offered a position outside of teaching agriculture. (3)
- I have not explored a job outside of teaching agriculture. (4)

Thank you for completing this questionnaire! Your information will help Iowa State University researchers investigate the teacher attrition problem we are currently facing.

I would like to interview those who are interested in helping to further inform this study. If you are interested in participating in an interview, please click the link provided below to enter a separate questionnaire where you can enter your contact information.

Click the link below to enter your preferences and information to set up an interview:

[[Link to Set up Interview](#)]

This is done to keep your personally identifiable information separate from your questionnaire to protect confidentiality.

This questionnaire is intended to broadly collect larger pieces of data while the interview will go deeper and better assess the strengths and challenges facing agricultural educators.

You will choose what type of interview format you would prefer from the following options: in-person, phone, webcam (Skype, Google Hangout, FaceTime), or focus group.

Personal Interview Guiding Questions

Over the Edge: Factors Nudging Mid-Career Agricultural Educators Out of the Profession Interview Questions

Central Research Question:

Why are current agricultural education instructors considering leaving the teaching profession?

Initial Interview Questions:*

1. How long have you been teaching high school agricultural education?
2. Why did you initially choose to teach agricultural education?
3. Describe your teaching experiences this past year? Has it differed from previous years?
4. Do you like your job? Why or why not?
5. Describe your personal life this past year? Any major life events happen?
6. Tell me the reason(s) you might be considering leaving the agricultural education teaching profession.

(Ask follow up questions if needed- Make sure to gather all reasons, in order of importance to the individual, and try to be specific)

7. If you left teaching next year, what might you do for a career?
8. Would you recommend to a young person a career in agricultural education? Why or why not?
9. What would you recommend to a group of state agricultural education leaders as to measures or action steps that could be taken to help solve the teacher retention problem?

*Semi-structured interview- Ask follow up questions as needed

Informed Consent Document

Project Title: Over the Edge: Factors Nudging Mid-Career Agricultural Educators Out of the Profession

Investigators: Jay Solomonson, Graduate Student; Michael Retallick, PhD

This form describes a research project. It has information to help you decide whether or not you wish to participate. Research studies include only people who choose to take part—your participation is completely voluntary. Please discuss any questions you have about the study or about this form with the project staff before deciding to participate.

Introduction:

The purpose of this research is to understand agriculture teachers are leaving the profession. You are being asked to participate in a research study about the teacher retention problem in the United States. You were selected as a possible participant because of your previous employment working as an agriculture education teacher. You should not participate if you are not a former agricultural education teacher or are under 18 years of age.

Description of Procedures:

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to be involved in either a personal interview or focus group answering questions related to your experience as a mid-career agricultural educator and your thoughts and perceptions on teacher attrition. The study will take place at the location chosen between the researcher and the participant. Your participation will last for approximately 30 minutes to complete an interview and approximately 60 minutes for a focus group.

If you agree to be a participant in this research, we would ask you to do the following things:

- 1. Make sure to contact the researcher if you are unable to participate at your designated time/location and would like to reschedule OR if you plan to withdraw from the study.*
- 2. Be truthful and honest when answering questions asked of you.*

Risks or Discomforts:

While participating in this study you may experience the following risks or discomforts: This study does not involve any type of physical risk; you will be asked to answer questions regarding your experience associated with your agricultural education teaching position. Although this study is not designed to help you personally, the information you contribute will help us better understand the agricultural education teacher retention problem in the United States.

Benefits:

If you decide to participate in this study, there will be no direct benefit to you. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by helping address the teacher retention issue facing agricultural education.

Costs and Compensation:

You will not have any costs from participating in this study. You will receive no compensation or reimbursement for participation in this study.

Participant Rights:

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part in the study or to stop participating at any time, for any reason, without penalty or negative consequences. You can skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

Your decision to participate, decline, or withdraw from participation will have no effect on your current status or future relations with Iowa State University.

If you have any questions *about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury*, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu, or Director, (515) 294-3115, Office for Responsible Research, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

Confidentiality

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy study records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken: All data will be coded and names will be removed. Research data will be stored in a locked file cabinet and computer files will require a passcode to access. The data will be made available only to the persons conducting the research. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link participants to the research. Recorded audio will be transcribed then destroyed.

Questions

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information *about the study*, contact Jay Solomonson at jks1@iastate.edu or 309-798-6571 OR Dr. Michael Retallick at msr@iastate.edu or 515-294-4810.

Consent and Authorization Provisions

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document, and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

 Participant's Printed Name

Signature

Date

Initial Email to Potential Participants

Dear

As a teacher in the agricultural education community, you understand the highs and lows that come with teaching. You are a successful mid-career agricultural education teacher and FFA advisor who understands the hard work and diligence necessary for this important profession.

In an effort to improve agricultural teacher retention nationwide, I am asking you to complete a questionnaire related to your experiences as a teacher. Please complete the survey at the following link- [Link], the survey should only take about 10 minutes to complete.

In cooperation with the National Association of Agricultural Educators, researchers at Iowa State University will compile and analyze the data collected for the study. The data will be used to determine methods to improve retention of quality agriculture education teachers and identify factors which impact a teacher's decision to leave the profession.

Your input is extremely important for this study and your opinion is tremendously valuable to address this important issue.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration to help with this study. Open and honest feedback from you will help the agricultural education community find a solution for the issues which impact a teacher's decision to leave the profession. I appreciate your continued efforts to help improve agricultural education!

Sincerely,

Jay Solomonson
Graduate Student
Iowa State University

Dr. Michael Retallick
Professor and Chair
Agricultural Education & Studies
Iowa State University

Follow up Email to Potential Participants

Dear

Last week I sent you a survey regarding the teacher attrition problems we are facing in our profession. This is a reminder that if you have not completed the survey, please consider doing so. Your input is extremely important for this study and your opinion is tremendously valuable to address this important issue.

Please complete the survey at the following link- [Link], the survey should only take about 10 minutes to complete.

In cooperation with the National Association of Agricultural Educators, researchers at Iowa State University will compile and analyze the data collected for the study. The data will be used to determine methods to improve retention of quality agriculture education teachers and identify factors which impact a teacher's decision to leave the profession.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration to help with this study. Open and honest feedback from you will help the agricultural education community find a solution for the issues which impact a teacher's decision to leave the profession. I appreciate your continued efforts to help improve agricultural education!

Sincerely,

Jay Solomonson
Graduate Student
Iowa State University

Dr. Michael Retallick
Professor and Chair
Agricultural Education & Studies
Iowa State University

**Examining Teacher Attrition through Former Teachers who left the Secondary
Agricultural Education Classroom**

Illinois Agricultural Education Teacher Attrition and Retention Questionnaire

Consent to Participate

Please read the consent statement carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information about you and your experiences during your final year of teaching in a secondary agricultural education program. The results from this questionnaire will be used, in part, to address the issue of agriculture teacher retention and recruitment. As an important part of agricultural education, your insights about personal experiences are extremely valuable.

The study is conducted in cooperation with the Facilitating Coordination for Agricultural Education (FCAE) and both Iowa State University and the University of Illinois. The data collected from the study will be analyzed by researchers from these institutions. This research presents no more than a minimal risk of harm to subjects. Your decision to participate or decline participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to terminate your participation at any time without penalty. Only those 18 and older are invited to participate. If you do not wish to complete this survey or are under 18 years old, please close the webpage. Your participation in this research will be completely anonymous, and data will be analyzed and reported in aggregate. You will not be asked to provide any personally-identifiable information.

Possible outlets of dissemination of the results of this study may be publication in a journal and presentation at a conference. If you have questions about the questionnaire, please contact Jay Solomonson at jks1@iastate.edu or (309) 798-6571 or Dr. Debra Korte at dskorte@illinois.edu or (217) 244-8086.

Please be completely honest with your opinions. This questionnaire should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study or any concerns or complaints, contact University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or via email at irb@illinois.edu. Your decision to participate, decline, or withdraw from participation will have no effect on your current status or future relations with the University of Illinois or Iowa State University.

- I have read the procedure described above and am 18 years or older. I voluntarily agree to participate in this questionnaire. (1)
- I do not wish to participate in this questionnaire. (2)

Part I. Factors Impacting the Decision to Leave the Profession

Please rate each factor as you perceived it to impact your decision to leave the teaching profession in a secondary agricultural education program.

	Did Not Impact (1)	Slightly Impacted (2)	Somewhat Impacted (3)	Moderately Impacted (4)	Strongly Impacted (5)
Classroom climate (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Paperwork (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pressure to meet personal standards/expectations (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Salary (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of facilities (classroom, shop, lab, greenhouse) (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Instructional resources (lab/classroom supplies) (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Out-of-classroom expectations (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School board (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please rate each factor as you perceived it to impact your decision to leave the teaching profession in a secondary agricultural education program.

	Did Not Impact (1)	Slightly Impacted (2)	Somewhat Impacted (3)	Moderately Impacted (4)	Strongly Impacted (5)
FFA stipend (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School environment (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student behavior/discipline problems (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pressure to meet expectations of students' parents and/or guardians (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interaction(s) with parent(s) and/or guardian(s) (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students' motivation (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School building principal (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pressure to meet expectations of other FFA advisors (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please rate each factor as you perceived it to impact your decision to leave the teaching profession in a secondary agricultural education program.

	Did Not Impact (1)	Slightly Impacted (2)	Somewhat Impacted (3)	Moderately Impacted (4)	Strongly Impacted (5)
Extended contract (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
District superintendent (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Level of personal accomplishment (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pressure to maintain level of program success (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student teaching experience (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family/personal reasons (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feelings of emotional instability (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pressure to meet expectations of administrator(s) (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please feel free to include additional comments about factors impacting your decision to leave teaching high school agricultural education.

Part II. *Frequency of behaviors, attitudes, and feelings related to the decision to leave the profession*

Please indicate the frequency with which you experienced the following behaviors, attitudes, or feelings during your final year of teaching secondary agricultural education.

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the Time (4)	Always (5)
Negativity towards students (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health concerns (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Confidence to teach the curriculum (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Negativity towards students' parent(s) and/or guardian(s) (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emotional exhaustion (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feelings of guilt for time spent away from family (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Negativity towards other agriculture teachers (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate the frequency with which you experienced the following behaviors, attitudes, or feelings during your final year of teaching secondary agricultural education.

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the Time (4)	Always (5)
Negativity towards community members (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Confident in ability to teach students (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uncomfortable preparing students for FFA competitions/CDEs (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical exhaustion (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inability to complete tasks (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Negativity towards school administrator(s) (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate the frequency with which you experienced the following behaviors, attitudes, or feelings during your final year of teaching secondary agricultural education.

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the Time (4)	Always (5)
Ability to feel "caught up" with responsibilities (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Negativity towards teaching profession (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Negative self-reflection (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mental exhaustion (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of personal accomplishment (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stress / Anxiety (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please feel free to include additional comments about how you felt your final year of teaching.

Part III. Additional Questions

1. From your vantage point, was leaving the teaching profession the right decision?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Undecided (3)

Please explain your answer to the previous question.

2. Would you encourage a young person who expressed interest in becoming an agriculture teacher to pursue that career?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Undecided (3)

Please explain your answer to the previous question.

3. Before your final year of teaching, how frequently did you consider leaving the profession of agricultural education?

- Never (1)
- Rarely (2)
- Occasionally (3)
- Frequently (4)
- Almost Always (5)

4. In your own words, why did you leave the profession of agricultural education?

Please feel free to include additional comments about leaving the profession.

5. What factor(s) would influence your decision to return to teaching?

6. After leaving your teaching position from secondary agriculture education, what did you do for employment? Was it full time or part time?

7. What changes, if any, would you suggest to improve Illinois Agricultural Education?

Part IV. Demographic Information.

1. Please select your gender:

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

2. Please select the option that best describes your race/ethnicity:

- White, non-Hispanic (1)
- African-American (3)
- Hispanic (4)
- Asian-Pacific Islander (5)
- Native American (6)
- Other (please specify below): (7) _____
- Prefer not to respond. (8)

3. Please indicate the type of licensure and/or certification in which you were employed.

- Fully state certified according to Illinois State Board of Education minimum requirements (1)
- Provisionally certified, working toward full licensure (2)
- Provisionally certified (3)
- Other (4)

4. Please list the name of the educational institution where you received all applicable degrees.

- Associate's Degree (1)
- Bachelor's Degree (2)
- Master's Degree (3)
- Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) (4)
- Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) (5)

5. Please select the grade level of students you were responsible for teaching during your final year of teaching. (Select all that apply.)

- 12 - Seniors (1)
- 11 - Juniors (2)
- 10 - Sophomores (3)
- 9 - Freshmen (4)
- 8 - Junior High (5)
- Adult Education (6)
- Other (7) _____

6. Please enter the requested information for each school in which you have been employed, starting with the most recent school where you were employed as a secondary agriculture teacher.

	Number of Teachers in Ag Program (including yourself) (1)	Number of Years at School (2)	Number of Students in Graduating Class (approximate average) (3)	Ag Student Enrollment (approximate average) (4)	Number of FFA Members (approximate average) (5)
Most Recent School (1)					
Next Most Recent School (2)					
Next Most Recent School (3)					
Next Most Recent School (4)					

Please feel free to include additional comments about your teaching situation.

7. How many total years did you teach secondary agricultural education?

8. What was your age when you left the teaching profession?

9. What was your annual salary during your final year of teaching?

10. What is your current annual salary?

11. During your final year of teaching at the secondary level, were you employed with an extended contract?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

12. What was the length of time for your extended contract during your final year of teaching? (Please specify number, days, months, etc.)

Thank you for completing this questionnaire! Your information will help Iowa State University and University of Illinois researchers investigate the teacher attrition problem we are currently facing.

I would like to interview those who are interested in helping to further inform this study. If you are interested in participating in an interview, please click the link provided below to enter a separate questionnaire where you can enter your contact information. By clicking on the link and filling out the next questionnaire, you are giving your consent to participate in a personal interview.

Click the link below to enter your preferences and information to set up an interview:

[Link to Set up Interview]

This is done to keep your personally identifiable information separate from your questionnaire to protect confidentiality.

This questionnaire is intended to broadly collect larger pieces of data while the interview will go deeper and better assess the strengths and challenges facing agricultural educators.

You will choose what type of interview format you would prefer from the following options: in-person, phone, webcam (Skype, Google Hangout, FaceTime), or focus group.

Personal Interview Guiding Questions

Examining Teacher Attrition through Former Teachers who left the Secondary Agricultural Education Classroom Interview Questions

Central Research Question:

What would influence a current agricultural educator to stay or a former agricultural educator to return to the profession?

Initial Interview Questions:*

1. Why did you initially want to teach agricultural education? Why did you go into the profession?
2. Did you feel that you were prepared for all or most aspects of the job prior to your first teaching position? Explain.
3. By the time you left, did you feel proficient at all or most aspects of your job? Explain.
4. What factor had the largest impact on you leaving the profession?
 - a. Possible Follow-ups:
 1. Why did you decide to leave when you did?
 2. Have them elaborate on their answer
5. What are you doing now for a career? Are you more or less satisfied with this career choice? Why or why not?
6. Have you considered re-entering the Ag Ed teaching profession at the high school level? What factor(s) would influence your decision to return to teaching?
7. What would have kept you from leaving the high school Ag Ed classroom?
8. What do we need to do as a profession (things we can control) to keep people from leaving agricultural education at the high school level?

*Semi-structured interview- Ask follow up questions as needed

Initial Email to Potential Participants

[Date]

Dear

I hope this message finds you well. The reason for my email is to see if you would be willing to complete a short survey regarding your experiences teaching high school agricultural education.

As a former teacher in the agricultural education community, you understand the highs and lows that come with teaching. You were a successful agriculture education teacher and FFA advisor who understands the hard work and diligence necessary for this important profession.

In an effort to improve teacher retention in Illinois and nationwide, I am asking you to complete a questionnaire related to your experiences as a teacher. The questionnaire should take approximately **10-15 minutes** to complete, and can be accessed from this link at the bottom of this page.

In cooperation with the Facilitating Coordination in Agricultural Education (FCAE) and the universities throughout the state who offer agricultural education programs, researchers from the University of Illinois and Iowa State University will compile and analyze the data collected for the study. The data will be used to determine methods to improve retention of quality agriculture education teachers and identify factors which impact a teacher's decision to leave the profession.

Your input is extremely important for this study. Although many studies have been conducted with current teachers, very few studies have been conducted with teachers who have decided to leave the agriculture teaching profession. Your opinion is tremendously valuable to address this important issue.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration to help with this study. Open and honest feedback from you will help the agricultural education community find a solution for the issues which impact a teacher's decision to leave the profession. I appreciate your continued efforts to help improve agricultural education!

Sincerely,

Jay Solomonson
Graduate Student
Iowa State University

Debra Korte, PhD
Teaching Associate
Agricultural Education Program

Follow up Email to Potential Participants

[Date]

Dear

Last week I sent you a survey regarding the agriculture teacher attrition problems we are facing in Illinois. This is a reminder that if you have not completed the survey, please consider doing so. Your input is extremely important for this study and your opinion is tremendously valuable to address this important issue. Please complete the survey by clicking on the link below, the survey should only take about **10-15 minutes** to complete.

In cooperation with the Facilitating Coordination in Agricultural Education (FCAE) and the universities throughout the state who offer agricultural education programs, researchers from the University of Illinois and Iowa State University will compile and analyze the data collected for the study. The data will be used to determine methods to improve retention of quality agriculture education teachers and identify factors which impact a teacher's decision to leave the profession

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration to help with this study. Open and honest feedback from you will help the agricultural education community find a solution for the issues which impact a teacher's decision to leave the profession. I appreciate your continued efforts to help improve agricultural education!

Jay Solomonson
Graduate Student
Iowa State University

Debra Korte, PhD
Teaching Associate
University of Illinois

APPENDIX C**PERMISSION TO USE BRAYFIELD-ROTHE JOB SATISFACTION SCALE**

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APPENDIX D

PERMISSION TO USE CHAPMAN'S MODEL OF THE INFLUENCES ON
TEACHER RETENTION

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Home

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Help



Title: A Model of the Influences on
Teacher Retention
Author: David W. Chapman
Publication: Journal of Teacher Education
Publisher: SAGE Publications
Date: 09/01/1983
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