Examining Another Source of Recruitment for Agriculture Education Teachers

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One mission of school-based agricultural education (SBAE) is to prepare youth for careers in agriculture and STEM fields (Fraze & Briers, 1987; Phipps et al., 2008)

Shortage of qualified agriculture teachers (Foster et al., 2014)

Shortage skilled workers in agriculture (Goeker et al., 2015; U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee, 2012)

Solving the teacher shortage issue is critical in meeting the scientific and professional workforce demands of the 21st century (Stripling & Ricketts, 2016)

Recruitment and retention
Most common source of recruitment is from within SBAE (Arrington, 1985; Hillison, Camp & Burke, 1987; Park & Rudd, 2005)

Research into other sources is recommended (Lawver & Torres, 2011)

Lack of current literature about atypical (non-SBAE) individuals in agricultural education (Lawver & Torres, 2011)
Research Goals

❖ Explore the factors influencing atypical pre-service and early career teachers to pursue agricultural education

❖ Examine the unique challenges atypical pre-service and early career teachers face in agricultural education
Research Questions

❧ Why do atypical individuals not participate in SBAE?

❧ Why do atypical individuals choose to major in Agricultural Education?

❧ What challenges do atypical individuals experience in Agricultural Education?

❧ What is the perceived career commitment among atypical individuals?
Methods

- Qualitative, phenomenological design
- Theoretical Framework: Fit-Choice Model (Watt & Richardson 2007)
- Purposive sampling for maximum variation (Patton, 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Number (n = 8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-service teachers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-service (1-2 years)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non traditional (age)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional (age)</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
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Methods: Data Collection

- Semi-structured interviews
  - 5 participants; 2 interviews
  - About 60 minutes each
  - Audio recorded and transcribed verbatim

- Written responses
  - 3 participants via email

- Questions to elicit information regarding atypical individuals’ experiences in agricultural education
Methods: Data Analysis

- Data analyzed and coded for thematic content
  - Open, axial, selective coding (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003)

Rigor and Trustworthiness (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011)
- Credibility (reflective journal)
- Transferability (purposive sampling, descriptions of participants)
- Dependability (audit trail)
- Triangulation (multiple sources, independent coding)
Conceptual Model of Findings

Why did you choose Agriculture Education?
- Influencers
- Previous Experience
- Values

Why did you not participate in SBAE?
- Other distractions
- Lack of knowledge/availability
- Negative Perceptions

What Challenges do you experience?
- Feeling of inadequacy
- Outside group/lack of belonging

What is your level of career commitment?
- Fallback career is important
- Teaching experience may influence commitment level
Key Conclusions

❖ All themes regarding participants’ choice to teach align with the FIT-Choice Model
❖ Reasons to teach among atypical and SBAE individuals do not differ

❖ Atypical individuals have unique challenges in Agricultural Education
❖ FFA is the root challenge
   ❖ Outsider; inadequacy

❖ Fallback career is important to atypical individuals
Recommendations for Ag Teachers

- Connect with groups beyond SBAE & FFA
  - 4-H, school clubs and organizations, community youth organizations, etc.

- Rebrand programs for more inclusivity
  - Emphasize leadership, community service, and focus on diversity
Recommendations for Agriculture Teacher Educators

- Adapt curriculum and planned experiences to meet the needs of both atypical and SBAE students
- Encourage Agricultural Education internships, clubs, and volunteer opportunities
- Create more teaching opportunities to increase commitment
Recommendations for Research

- Quantitative research, national scope
  - How influential and significant are these findings (themes) in Agricultural Education?
  - Is Utah unique?

- How can the challenges of atypical students and teachers be overcome?
Thank You!

What questions do you have?

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