

DIFFERENCES IN REASON WHY INDIVIDUALS CHOOSE TO BECOME AGRICULTURAL TEACHER EDUCATORS BY DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to collect demographic information on agricultural teacher educators. Furthermore, the study sought to identify factors that discriminate agriculture teacher educators on selected demographics. The target population was all agriculture teacher educators employed during the 1995-1996 school year at colleges and universities in the United States offering degree certification programs in agricultural education (N = 207). The entire census population was surveyed, with 86% providing usable data. A mailed questionnaire was used to collect demographic data on teacher educators and identify reasons why teacher educators chose to enter the education professoriate. From the results of the study, teacher educators in agricultural education are married, middle-aged Caucasian males employed at an 1862 land grant institution, having tenure and holding the rank of professor. Females enter the education professoriate to take advantage of personal and professional development opportunities while males want to share their interest in pedagogy and receive external benefits associated with the job. Ethnic minorities enter the education professoriate because they want to assume a leadership role in teacher education and to influence other minorities to enter the teaching profession. This study should be repeated every five years to analyze trends in the teaching profession.

Introduction and Theoretical Framework

The quality of teacher education programs is dependent on the quality of its professoriate - the men and women who develop, implement, and evaluate teacher education programs (Troyer, 1986). Yet, it was not until the 1960s that one began to find literature about members of the education professoriate (Howey & Zimpher, 1990).

The education professoriate has not been researched because of the lack of aptitude for or training in the inquiry by teacher education; the absence of time, support, and reward for inquiry; and the absence of vehicles that encourage and transmit scholarly knowledge (Cruickshank, 1984, p. 45). Cruickshank proposed a model to help guide inquiry in teacher education with one component looking at the education professoriate. Specific variables that could be studied on teacher educators included formative influences such as

family background and socioeconomic backgrounds, personal characteristics, and professional characteristics and abilities (Cruickshank, 1990).

Why study the education professoriate? The history of teacher education's presence in higher education is unclear and needs clarification. There is also continuous debate about the place teacher education has in higher education and the role and status of teacher educators (Ducharme & Ducharme, 1996). Furthermore, expectations of public school teachers influence the roles and responsibilities of teacher educators. With the continuous criticism of American public education, even though there has been a connection between what occurs in schools and teacher preparation, the lack of knowledge about who educates teachers is still non-existent (Goodlad, 1990).

Demographic characteristics of teacher educators include such characteristics as gender, ethnicity, age, academic rank, length of teaching

contract, marital status, and number of dependents under the age of 21 (McCullough, 1992). Troyer (1986) found that there were more males in the education professoriate than females. Ducharme, et al. (1996) reported that teacher educators were middle-aged white males tenured at either the full or associate professor level. Women constitute 28% of the education professoriate, yet only make up 12% of the faculty at the rank of full professor (AACTE, 1988). Women tend to publish less since they generally assume more supervisory and teaching responsibilities than do males (Ducharme, et al. 1996). Ethnic minorities account for less than 10% of the education professoriate and the future does not hold much promise for adding minorities to the education professoriate because less than 8% of doctoral students were minority (AACTE, 1987). Lynch (1990) found that more members of the vocational teacher education professoriate were middle-aged Caucasian males holding the rank of tenured professors or associate professors.

Carter (1981) found individuals chose to become teacher educators because they "drifted" into college teaching, they wanted to work with college-aged students, and they wanted jobs with security and prestige. Other commonly cited reasons for entering the education professoriate included the desire to make a difference in education, enjoyment of teaching, intellectual stimulation, lifestyle of a college teacher, encouragement and influence of others, and status and prestige of the profession (Burch, 1989).

McCullough (1992) studied doctoral students to determine why they wanted to become teacher educators and identified seven reasons. These reasons included personal and professional development, adult environment and pedagogy, meaningful contributions to the education field, external benefits, people targets, influence of significant others, and dissatisfaction in the K-12 position.

What does the future hold for the education professoriate in agricultural education? Where

would we like to be in the coming years regarding the make-up of faculty and staff preparing agriculture teachers? To know where we want to be, we must look at where we are today to see how far off we are from our ideals. No research exists in agricultural education from which we can establish a baseline. There is potential in teacher education, but we must show more unity, more acceptance of the problems and issues of modern American society, more demonstrated effectiveness in bringing about desired outcomes in teacher education graduates, and more imagination in bridging the world of today's youth (Ducharme, et al. 1996). Members of today's education professoriate must provide this leadership.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to collect baseline data on agriculture teacher educators. Specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Describe teacher educators in terms of their demographic characteristics.
2. Identify factors that best discriminate teacher educators on selected demographic characteristics.

Methods and Procedures

The population for this descriptive correlational study was all teacher educators employed in departments/programs at colleges and universities in the United States during the 1995-96 academic year offering degree certification programs in agricultural education. A teacher educator was defined as an individual employed full-time by the university who taught preservice professional education courses in agricultural education or had supervised preservice students in early field experiences or student teaching internships within the past two years. Department heads/programs chairs were contacted and asked to identify those faculty members within their department who met these criteria. Two-

hundred seven teacher educators were identified and surveyed in the study.

Questions for the questionnaire were adapted from McCullough's (1992) study on prospective teacher educators in general teacher education and Lynch's (1990) vocational teacher education study. The questionnaire consisted of six parts, of which only data from part one and part six are reported in this paper. Part one contained 50 Likert-type statements for teacher educators to indicate how important each statement was in their decision to become a teacher educator. The sixth part collected demographic information on teacher educators. The questionnaire was field and pilot tested for content and face validity and reliability with a group of vocational teacher educators ($n = 11$) not in agricultural education. A test-retest reliability coefficient of .73 was calculated on part one of the questionnaire, acceptable according to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994).

From the 50 statements in part one, factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were used to develop scales to identify reasons why individuals chose to become teacher educators. Seven scales were developed with a range of Cronbach's alpha coefficients from .79 to .89 with 2 to 11 items per scale. Respondents answered individual items using the Likert-type scale 1 = Unimportant, 2 = Of Little Importance, 3 = Moderately Important, 4 = Important, and 5 = Very Important. Therefore, the higher the scale score the more important the respondent perceived that scale as a reason for becoming a teacher educator.

The seven scales developed from part one of the questionnaire were identified and defined as follows:

Scale 1: External Benefits (11 items) ? the importance of working conditions of teacher educators, salary earned, opportunities for travel, and demand for teacher educators,

Scale 2: Teaching and Pedagogy (5 items) ? how important it was for teacher educators to work

with preservice students on pedagogy, share their interest in pedagogy, and having an impact on the field of education,

Scale 3 : Influence of Significant Others (4 items) ? how important it was for people (parents, friends, colleagues) to encourage respondents to become teacher educators,

Scale 4: Dissatisfaction With Prior Positions (6 items) ? how important it was to enter the education profession because of the dissatisfaction in prior teaching/administrative positions, dislike in working with K-12 students or in a K- 12 setting, and being bored with past levels of educational attainment,

Scale 5: Personal and Professional Development (7 items) ? how important it was for teacher educators to make better use of their professional abilities, to become more deeply challenged, and to satisfy the need to accomplish something of value,

Scale 6: Contribution to Teacher Education (2 items) ? how important it was for teacher educators to contribute to the knowledge base of teacher education through research and answer specific research questions, and

Scale 7: People Target (5 items) ? how important it was for teacher educators to help minorities and other talented individuals to enter teaching as well as to help minorities assume leadership roles in teacher education.

Appropriate mailing and follow-up procedures, as outlined by Salant and Dillman (1994), were used in the study. A total of 178 of 207 questionnaires were returned with usable data for a response rate of 86%. To address non-response error, 10 teacher educators who had not responded were contacted and asked a set of purposefully selected questions. Responses from non-respondents were compared to respondents and no significant differences were found, thus allowing the results to be generalized to the population.

Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 6.1 for Windows. Descriptive parameters, including frequencies, percentages, means, medians, modes, ranges, and standard deviations, were used to analyze data. Discriminant analysis was used to compare factors for becoming a teacher educator by selected demographic variables. The discriminating variables were the seven factors for becoming a teacher educator. Standardized discriminant function coefficients were used to indicate the relative importance of the discriminating variables on each categorical variable. Pooled within-group structure coefficients were used to indicate how the discriminating variables and discriminant functions were correlated within groups. Alpha levels were set at .05 a priori to determine any significant differences.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 reports categorical demographic characteristics of teacher educators. Sixty-eight percent were employed at 1862 land grant colleges, 8% were employed at 1890 land grant colleges, and 24% were employed at non-land grant colleges. Teacher educators were 48.1 years old (range from 29 to 67 years of age) with male teacher educators being 48.6 years old and female teacher educators being 41.6 years old.

Ninety-three percent were male and 7% were female. Eighty-five percent were married, 6% single, 5% divorced, 1% separated, and 1% widowed. The ethnic composition was 86% Caucasian, 7% African-American, and 5% percent Hispanic, Asian American/Pacific Islander, or another ethnicity.

Caucasian males accounted for 81% of agriculture teacher educators while Caucasian females made up 7%. Ethnic minority males made up 12% of agriculture teacher educators while there were no ethnic minority females in the agricultural education professoriate.

Forty-five percent held the rank of professor, 28% the rank of associate professor, 20% the rank of assistant professor, and 6% were instructors or lecturers. Seventy-one percent were

tenured, 17% were non-tenured but employed in tenure-line positions, 6% were employed in non-tenure track positions but had relatively secure continuous employment, and 4% were ineligible for tenure in their current position. Fifty-seven percent were employed on 12-month contracts, 32% on 9-month contracts, 5% on 10-month contracts, and 4% on 11-month contracts.

Distinguishing Agriculture Teacher Educators on Selected Demographic Variables

Discriminant analysis was used to determine differences between reasons individuals chose to become agriculture teacher educators and demographic characteristics reported in Table 1. Only those discriminant functions that were significant ($p < .05$) are reported. Univariate statistics (means and standard deviations) were reported by demographic characteristics for each discriminating variable. Standardized canonical discriminant function coefficients (b) were interpreted using the rule those coefficients whose absolute value is not less than one-half of the largest value are considered important in the discriminant function (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1996). Pooled within-group structure coefficients (s) above .30 (absolute) were considered important (Hair, et al., 1996).

Type of Institution Where Employed

For the demographic characteristic type of institution where employed, agriculture teacher educators employed at 1890 institutions had significantly higher means than agriculture teacher educators employed at both 1862 institutions and non-land grant institutions on the following discriminating variables: external benefits, contribution to teacher education, and people target (Table 2). Furthermore, agriculture teacher

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Teacher Educators (N = 178)

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Type of Institution Where Employed		
1862 Land Grant	121	68
1890 Land Grant	14	8
Non Land Grant	43	24
Gender		
Male	165	93
Female	13	7
Marital Status		
Married	153	85
Single	10	6
Divorced	9	5
Separated	1	1
Widowed	1	1
Not Reported	4	2
Ethnic Background		
Caucasian	154	86
African-American	13	7
Other Ethnicity	4	2
Hispanic	3	2
Asian American/Pacific Islander	1	1
Not Reported	3	2
Academic Rank		
Professor	81	45
Associate Professor	49	28
Assistant Professor	36	20
Instructor/Lecturer	10	6
Not Reported	2	1
Tenure Status		
Tenured	128	71
Non-tenured, but in tenure line position	30	17
Non-tenured, but in non-tenure line position	10	6
Ineligible for tenure	7	4
Not reported	3	2
Length of Annual Contract		
12 months	103	57
9 month	57	32
10 month	8	5
11 month	7	4
Not Reported	3	2

educators employed at 1862 institutions had significantly higher means than agriculture teacher educators employed at non-land grant institutions on the discriminating variable contribution to teacher education.

Because there were three levels of the categorical variable, two discriminant functions could be significant for classifying agriculture teacher educators by type of institution where employed. The following null hypothesis was tested on discriminant function one for type of institution where employed: There is no difference between 1862 institutions, 1890 institutions and non-land grant group centroids on the discriminant score. A Wilks' lambda of .7160 and chi-square of 5 1.13 were reported with 14 degrees of freedom. The chi-square was significant at $p < .05$; therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant difference between the group centroids of agriculture teacher educators employed at 1862 institutions, 1890 institutions, and non-land grant institutions.

The standardized canonical discriminant function coefficients for discriminant function one are shown

in Table 3. The discriminating variables contribution to teacher education ($b = .80$), teaching and pedagogy ($b = -.45$), and people target ($b = .43$) were the most important variables in discriminant function one. Interpreting the pooled within-group structure coefficients, contribution to teacher education ($s = .84$) and people target ($s = .53$) were the variables that loaded high on discriminant function one.

The same null hypothesis was tested on discriminant function two for type of institution where agriculture teacher educators were employed. A Wilks' lambda of .8755 and η^2 of 21.52 were reported with 6 degrees of freedom. The chi-square was significant at $p < .05$; therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant difference between the group centroids of agriculture teacher educators employed at 1862 institutions, 1890 institutions, and non-land grant institutions for discriminant function two.

The standardized canonical discriminant function coefficients for discriminant function two for type of institution where employed are shown in Table 4.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations Describing Agriculture Teacher Educators by Type of Institution Where Employed on Seven Discriminating Variables

Discriminating Variable	1862		1890		Other		F
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
External Benefits	3.00	.80	3.58	.82	3.29	.92	3.97**
Teaching and Pedagogy	3.99	.68	4.09	.72	3.98	.78	.14
Influence of Significant Others	3.70	.96	3.92	.79	3.69	1.06	.33
Dissatisfaction With Prior Positions	1.90	.87	2.44	.77	1.92	.80	2.48
Personal and Professional Development	3.82	.72	4.24	.72	3.69	.80	2.72
Contribution to Teacher Education	3.05	1.02	3.84	1.05	2.33	.94	13.52**
People Target	2.84	.79	3.89	.81	2.93	.69	10.73**

**EC.05

Table 3. Summary Data for Discriminant Function One Describing Agriculture Teacher Educators by Type of Institution Where Employed

Discriminating Variable	Function 1		Group Centroids	
	b ^a	s ^b		
External Benefits	-.35	.08	1862	.075
Teaching and Pedagogy	-.45	.08	1890	1.257
Influence of Significant Others	.06	.11	Other	-.642
Dissatisfaction With Prior Positions	.14	.27		
Personal and Professional Development	.29	.37		
Contribution to Teacher Education	.80	.84		
People Target	.43	.53		

^a = standardized discriminant function coefficients, ^b=within-group structure coefficients

Table 4. Summary Data for Discriminant Function One Describing Agriculture Teacher Educators by Type of Institution Where Employed

Discriminating Variable	Function 1		Group Centroids	
	b ^a	s ^b		
External Benefits	.58	.57	1862	-.246
Teaching and Pedagogy	-.17	.05	1890	.811
Influence of Significant Others	-.20	.10	Other	.445
Dissatisfaction With Prior Positions	.15	.31		
Personal and Professional Development	-.20	.12		
Contribution to Teacher Education	.51	-.20		
People Target	.85	.69		

^a = standardized discriminant function coefficients, ^b=within-group structure coefficients

The discriminating variables people target ($b = .85$), external benefits ($b = .58$), and contribution to teacher education ($b = -.51$) had the most importance in discriminant function two. Interpreting the pooled within group structure coefficients, external benefits ($s = .69$) and people target ($s = .57$) were the variables that loaded high on the discriminant function two. As a result of the two discriminant functions, 60% of agriculture teacher educators were correctly classified by the type of institution where employed.

Gender

For the demographic characteristic gender, male agriculture teacher educators had significantly higher means than female agriculture teacher educators on the discriminating variable teaching and pedagogy (Table 5).

The following null hypothesis was tested: There is no difference between female agriculture teacher educator and male agriculture teacher educator group centroids on the discriminant score. A Wilks' lambda of .8905 and chi-square of 18.84 were reported with 7 degrees of freedom. The chi-square was significant at $p < .05$; therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant difference between the group centroids of female agriculture teacher educators and male agriculture teacher educators.

The standardized canonical discriminant function coefficients are shown in Table 6. The discriminating variables teaching and pedagogy ($b = 1.00$), external benefits ($b = .72$), and personal and professional development ($b = -.71$) had the most importance in the discriminant function. Interpreting the pooled within-group structure coefficients, teaching and pedagogy ($s = .64$) was the only variable that loaded high on the discriminant function. As a result of the discriminant function, 77% of agriculture teacher educators were correctly classified by gender.

Ethnicity

For the demographic characteristic ethnicity, minority agriculture teacher educators had significantly higher means than Caucasian agriculture teacher educators did on the following discriminating variables: contribution to teacher education and people target (Table 7).

The following null hypothesis was tested: There is no difference between minority agriculture teacher educator and Caucasian agriculture teacher educator group centroids on the discriminant score. A Wilks' lambda of .8011 and chi-square of 35.81 were reported with 7 degrees of freedom. The chi-square was significant at $p < .05$; therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant difference between the group centroids of minority agriculture teacher educators and Caucasian agriculture teacher educators.

The standardized canonical discriminant function coefficients are shown in Table 8. The discriminating variable people target ($b = 1.05$) had the most importance in the discriminant function. Interpreting the pooled within structure coefficients, people target ($s = .79$) was the only variable that loaded high on the discriminant function. As a result of the discriminant scores, 89% of agriculture teacher educators were correctly classified by ethnicity.

Conclusions

The typical agriculture teacher educator is a married, middle-aged Caucasian male who is employed at an 1862 land grant institution, having tenure, holding the rank of professor and having a 12 month contract.

Research shows that there are differences in reasons why individuals choose to become agriculture teacher educators based upon selected demographic characteristics. Using the standardized discriminant function coefficients and the within-

Table 5. Means and Standard Deviations Describing Agriculture Teacher Educators by Gender on Seven Discriminating Variables

Discriminating Variable	Male		Female		F
	M	SD	M	SD	
External Benefits	2.80	.85	3.13	.84	1.54
Teaching and Pedagogy	3.41	1.04	4.04	.66	8.29'
Influence of Significant Others	3.82	.81	3.71	.98	.14
Dissatisfaction With Prior Positions	2.03	.81	1.94	.86	.11
Personal and Professional Development	3.99	.96	3.81	.73	.54
Contribution to Teacher Education	2.81	1.17	2.95	1.07	.16
People Target	2.98	.94	2.94	.81	.02

* $p < .05$

Table 6. Summary Data for Discriminant Function Describing Agriculture Teacher Educators by Gender

Discriminating Variable	Function 1		Group Centroids	
	b ^a	s ^b		
External Benefits	.72	.27	Female	-1.317
Teaching and Pedagogy	1.00	.64	Male	.092
Influence of Significant Others	-.12	-.08		
Dissatisfaction With Prior Positions	-.16	-.07		
Personal and Professional Development	-.71	-.16		
Contribution to Teacher Education	.08	.09		
People Target	.46	-.03		

^a = standardized discriminant function coefficients, ^b = within-group structure coefficients

Table 7. Means and Standard Deviations Describing Agriculture Teacher Educators by Ethnicity on Seven Discriminating Variables

Discriminating Variable	Minorities		Caucasians		F
	M	SD	M	SD	
External Benefits	3.09	1.00	3.11	.82	.01
Teaching and Pedagogy	4.08	.73	3.97	.70	.40
Influence of Significant Others	3.70	1.01	3.71	.96	.00
Dissatisfaction With Prior Positions	2.03	.83	1.93	.86	.28
Personal and Professional Development	3.76	.97	3.84	.70	.22
Contribution to Teacher Education	3.52	1.13	2.86	1.05	7.49*
People Target	3.72	.88	2.83	.74	25.77**

*p<. 05

Table 8. Summary Data for Discriminant Function Describing Agriculture Teacher Educators by Ethnicity

Discriminating Variable	Function 1		Group Centroids	
	b ^a	s ^b		
External Benefits	-.23	-.02	Female	1.271
Teaching and Pedagogy	-.35	.10	Male	-.192
Influence of Significant Others	-.16	.00		
Dissatisfaction With Prior Positions	-.04	.08		
Personal and Professional Development	-.30	-.07		
Contribution to Teacher Education	.35	.43		
People Target	1.08	.79		

^a = standardized discriminant function coefficients, ^b = within-group structure coefficients

group structure coefficients, agriculture teacher educators employed at 1890 land grant institutions perceive it important to make a contribution to teacher education, influence minorities to become teacher educators, to assume a leadership role in teacher education, and enjoy the benefits associated with being a teacher educator.

Agriculture teacher educators employed at 1862 land grant institutions perceive it important to make a contribution to the teacher education profession through research.

Males tend to enter the teacher education profession because they want to share their interest in pedagogy and to receive the external benefits associated with being an agriculture teacher educator. Females tend to enter the teacher education profession to take advantage of the personal and professional development opportunities available to them.

Minorities enter the education professoriate because they want to influence minorities to enter the teaching profession and to assume a leadership role in the teacher education profession. Implications and Recommendations

If teacher education is to make an impact in the future of public and higher education in agriculture, teacher educators will be responsible for providing the leadership to make such changes. As agricultural education continues to expand into non-traditional arenas, who will provide this leadership? Agricultural education departments/programs must make efforts to diversify their faculty by hiring individuals who can bring different areas of expertise to departments/programs to broaden the base of agricultural education and provide a range of opportunity to diversify and collaborate with other fields of education.

If teacher education is to increase the number of minority teacher educators (both ethnic and gender minorities) and minority teachers of agriculture, teacher education must have role models in the

profession. Agricultural education departments and program areas must make efforts to diversify their faculties and recruit and select minority candidates into the professoriate. A way of accomplishing this is to provide opportunities and attract outstanding minority teachers (ethnic and gender) into doctoral programs and prepare these individuals to assume leadership roles in agriculture teacher education.

Recommendations for Further Study

While this study provides a good foundation from which to look at agriculture teacher education, further research needs to be conducted in the following areas:

1. Replicate this study every three to five years to ascertain the status of the profession and to determine trends regarding the education professoriate in agriculture
2. Determine how satisfied teacher educators are in higher education and with their current roles and responsibilities in teacher education

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