SELECTED FACTORS INFLUENCING AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TO LEAVE THE PROFESSION IN OKLAHOMA

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural education in Oklahoma is a constantly changing and evolving profession. Although Oklahoma State University continues to graduate qualified and competent agricultural education teachers, many of these fail to remain in the profession Turnover rates within the first ten years of teaching has been consistent, resulting in many former teachers returning to the profession to fill positions (Reece, 1976). The teachers who leave the profession do enrich education and agriculture in many other ways, including vocational administration and higher education. The goal-oriented nature instilled in agricultural education teachers drives many of them to seek advancement not available in the teaching profession. This is not a detriment to agricultural education, but rather adds to the visibility and success of the profession as a whole. Many of these teachers would not have left the profession had it not been for certain selected factors A high percentage of beginning agriculture teachers leave the profession by the end of their third year because the expectations and demands of the position are overwhelming (Osbourne, 1992) The stress, heavy workload and constant pressure to be better has resulted in a profession that literally devours its young and forces them to look elsewhere for professional and personal satisfaction (Osbourne, 1992).

The duties and expectations placed upon agricultural education instructors are varied and rigorous. Many communities expect the agricultural education instructor to be a master of several instructional areas. In addition to the classroom duties of teaching six hours out of a seven hour school day, agriculture instructors are required to perform a

myriad of other tasks. The need to be central to the school's curriculum, enrollment pressures, single teacher programs, community involvement, public relations, FFA requirement, SAE duties and Livestock shows, adult education, laboratory management, the constant need to modify curriculum, and the diversity of teaching the industry of agriculture are all pressures placed upon agricultural education instructors.

Statement of the Problem

Oklahoma agricultural education has, and continues to lose a consistent number of agricultural education instructors to other professions The positive and negative effects of this professional loss must be addressed. Knowledge of the reasons teachers leave the profession will be of assistance in improving retention rates and allowing teachers to be more effective.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the selected factors which influenced teachers to leave the agricultural education teaching profession in Oklahoma during the period 1987 to 1997.

Objectives

The objectives of this study were to

(1) Determine community related factors which contribute to agricultural education teachers leaving the profession.

(2) Determine school and teaching related factors which contribute to agricultural education teachers leaving the profession.

(3) Determine personal factors which contribute to agricultural education teachers leaving the profession.

(4) Determine the perceptions of agricultural education as a career by those teachers who have left the profession.

(5) Determine family related factors which contribute to agricultural education teachers leaving the profession.

(6) Determine if changes in job responsibilities and requirements contribute to teachers leaving the profession.

Assumptions

It was assumed that the population sampled gave an accurate description of those factors that contributed to them leaving the teaching profession. Assumptions were also made that the former teachers responding were representative of all teachers who have left the profession.

Scope and Limitations

The following scope and limitations applied to the study:

The population consisted of those agricultural education instructors who had left the profession in Oklahoma between the years 1987 and 1997. Teachers who had left the profession during the period but were now currently employed as agricultural education instructors in Oklahoma were excluded from the study

Definitions

The following definition of terms was offered to provide clarity and consistency throughout the study.

Agricultural Education Instructor. A person who has met the requirements for a bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Education and is eligible for certification in the state of Oklahoma.

Beginning Teacher. Any certified agricultural education instructor who has no prior teaching experience in agricultural education.

Former Teacher. Any agricultural education instructor who has taught at least one year in the state of Oklahoma but has left the profession.

Job Satisfaction The level of overall happiness, self worth and self esteem felt by an individual concerning their career

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study analyzed factors contributing to agricultural education professionals leaving the teaching profession to pursue other occupational choices. This chapter assisted the author in exploring literature related to the specified objectives, as well as formulating a research instrument.

Research conducted in other states and similar studies

Wallace, 1967 studied the factors that determined why vocational agriculture teachers left the teaching profession. His conclusion was that limited opportunity for advancement was the primary factor for teachers leaving the profession. Other factors of significance were salary not commensurate with work, too many extra-curricular activities, a ceiling of earnings and the desire for a more permanent home.

Reece (1976) completed a similar study at Oklahoma State University designed to determine the factors that influenced vocational agriculture teachers to leave the profession over a six year time span, from 1970 to 1976. This study established a population of former agricultural education instructors who had left the profession to pursue other goals. A list of former instructors was obtained, and a questionnaire developed. The population consisted of 100 former agriculture teachers who had left the profession. The questionnaire used a scale for the respondents on closed questions, ranging from "extreme importance" to "no importance" related to their decision to leave

the profession. Of the 100 individuals mailed questionnaires, 79 responded.

Findings indicated that "free time for family activities" was of moderate importance for teachers to leave the profession. Forty-eight percent of the respondents indicated that current inflation levels rated a high or greater importance to them leaving the profession.

Recruitment, retention and career enhancement strategies in agricultural education

Establishing a means of recruitment and retention is vital to decreasing the loss of qualified personnel, as well as the introduction of beginning agricultural education teachers into a positive teaching environment. Often individuals complete four years of a teaching degree only to find out once they student teach, or even once they are employed as an agricultural education instructor, that this is not the correct career choice for them.

In a study by Slack and D'Aquino (1995) they followed the progress and process of how one Florida school system produces its own teachers. The program stemmed from a 1991 teacher survey, in which more than half of their teachers felt they lacked sufficient "on-the-job-training" in addition to student teaching. The school coordinated with an area university to encourage student teachers to come to the school system. The school also pioneered a future teachers club. Each of the districts 22 high schools offers a class in exploratory teaching for juniors and seniors. As part of their course work, the students assist teachers in their own schools and tutor younger students at other schools. Exposed to the real world of teaching, the teenagers are counseled to enroll in college preparatory classes and to develop study skills. For many of these students putting them in a

classroom early reinforces their commitment to becoming a teacher Equally as beneficial, early exposure convinces other students that they should find another profession More than thirty teachers, who had been students in this program, have entered the school system since its inception in 1991

In service needs of beginning agricultural education instructors

The process of becoming socialized into teaching is one of the most difficult stages in the professional development of agricultural education instructors. In research reported by Talbert, Camp and Camp, the induction process is a transition period during which beginning teachers move from a stage of being students to teachers This is a true paradigm shift in thinking, work ethic and development. For many this transition can be difficult and shocking. This transition stage is called induction. It is important that beginning teachers have support to help them through their first year (Wildman & Niles, 1987).

Super, Crites, Hummel, Overstreet and Warnath (1957) proposed a stage theory of vocational development. This theory established a life stage model with appropriate age spans corresponding to each stage. This theory further expounded on the induction process through the following stages:

1) Exploration-Trial stage (Age 22-24) This stage usually involves the first permanent job for the individual

2) Establishment-Trial stage (Age 25-30). This stage involves adjustment problems that

eventually lead to one of next stages.

3) Stabilization in the career (Age 31-44)

4) Job changes throughout the career

It is in the exploration-trial stage or establishment-trial stage when most beginning teachers enter the agriculture profession and either remain or seek other careers in the next stages.

During the study by Talbot, Camp and Camp, three beginning agricultural education instructors in three different southeastern states were observed during the 1989-90 school year. All three teachers experienced student discipline problems and the majority received a less than satisfactory rating in their annual evaluation.

This article also detailed and researched the unique requirements of agriculture teachers One of these was advising the FFA. All three teachers reported spending many hours outside of class time and on weekends coaching, transporting and working with students

The three individuals also listed safety issues in the laboratory as another primary area that was of major concern. These teachers were also physically and socially isolated from other teachers within the school system. This research showed clearly that a system of induction assistance is needed.

Swortzel (1995) described the six specific teacher roles and the skills and knowledge needed for each. These roles are

1) Facilitator of learning

2) Understander of the learner

3) Program Developer

4) Administrator

5) Professional Educator

6) Role model and mentor

Vocational Education Journal profiled beginning vocational teachers plans versus outcomes regarding beginning teachers. Although seventy-eight percent planned to remain in the teaching profession. only seventy percent did.

Job satisfaction and commitment of agricultural education instructors

Identifying the level of job satisfaction is crucial to determining the overall reasons that agricultural education instructors leave the teaching profession. There has been a great deal of research done on job satisfaction, much of it related to agricultural education. Cano and Miller (1992) reported from a survey of 336 secondary agricultural education instructors The lead satisfying factor identified was working conditions in the Agricultural Education profession

Odell (1990) examined the job satisfaction of married agricultural education instructors. A sample of 113 married agriculture teachers and their spouses completed the Purdue teacher opinionaire and the dyadic adjustment scale The spouse's marital satisfaction contributed to teacher job satisfaction. The presence of children ands salaries under $25,000 showed a negative relationship with job satisfaction.

Research was also conducted in Pennsylvania by Bowen and Radhakrishna (1991) concerning the job satisfaction of agricultural education faculty The primary purpose of this study was to determine if the job satisfaction of agricultural education faculty tends to

be a constant phenomena. The population of this study included all faculty listed in the Directory of Teacher Educators in Agriculture, 1989-90.

Conclusions from the study were that the job satisfaction of agricultural education faculty is a constant phenomenon as indicated by limited variation in the level of satisfaction over a ten year period. Additionally, demographic and situational variables were found not to be good indicators of the level of job satisfaction for agriculture education faculty

In a study conducted in North Carolina (Jewell, Beavers, Kirby, and Flowers, 1990), relationships between levels of job satisfaction and the instructor's perception toward agricultural education as a profession was measured. The problem was to identify what intrinsic, extrinsic and general job satisfaction levels the agriculture instructors possessed. The study was conducted as a descriptive study which incorporated aspects of correlational research methodology. The population consisted of the vocational agriculture teachers employed in North Carolina during the 1985-86 school year. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire was selected, based on recommendations reported in Vroom (1964) and Robison, Athansiou and Head (1969).

The general job satisfaction level was scored at a 75.86% overall rating. Vocational agriculture teachers exhibited an overall moderate level of job satisfaction, while exhibiting average levels of intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction. North Carolina Agriculture teachers tend to be more dissatisfied with the financial support they receive than with their working environment and professional acceptance (Jewell, Beavers, Kirby, and Flowers, 1990)

An additional study by Tilburg (1987) examined the relationship between

performance based rewards and job performance - job satisfaction. Tilburg's study established a purpose of investigating this relationship through the cooperative extension service and its county agents. Since these agents must pass through similar collegiate requirements as agricultural education instructors, and many of the job responsibilities are similar, this was a valid study for review.

The objectives of this study were to:

1 Describe the population on each of the following variables:

1 Self-rating of job performance

2 Overall job satisfaction

3. Satisfaction with pay

4. Satisfaction with promotion

5. Satisfaction with co-workers

6 Satisfaction with the work itself

7 Satisfaction with supervision

8. Program area

9. Perceived performance-intrinsic reward contingency

10. Perceived performance-extrinsic reward contingency

2 Determine the relationship among the selected variables

3 Determine if there were moderating effects of certain selected variables on the relationship between other selected variables.

The population consisted of all Ohio Cooperative Extension Service county agents under contract March 1, 1985. Names were obtained from a validated list secured from the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service The population (N=244) included agriculture agents (n=94), home economics agents (n=80) and 4-H youth agents (n=70).
The entire population was used in the study and was referred to as a sample of all populations of Ohio Cooperative Extension Service county agents who might have been employed by the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service at other points in time. This logic permitted the use of inferential statistics in the data analysis.

The data was collected during the month of May, 1985 using a mail questionnaire. Generalizability of the results of the study was determined by comparing early respondents with late respondents (Miller & Smith, 1983) on all variables using positive (+) tests. No differences were found.

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, multiple regression and moderated regression Pearson correlation coefficients were used for analysis of the data.
Results found indicated that agents reported an overall job satisfaction, while they tend to reward themselves intrinsically for good performance. Substantial positive relationships were found between satisfaction with pay and promotion and with the extrinsic reward contingency. A moderate positive relationship was found between satisfaction with supervision and the extrinsic reward contingency

High satisfaction with intrinsic components of the job (co-workers and the work itself) and lower satisfaction with extrinsic components (pay, promotion, supervision) as well as low scores on the extrinsic reward contingency and high scores on the intrinsic reward contingency indicated that agents tend to reward themselves for high performance

while they perceive that the organization does not

Supply and demand of agricultural education professionals

The supply and demand of agricultural education instructors is of vital concern to the future of the programs and their success. Additionally, increased demand and unfilled positions only add to the reasons to deny funding for a program in a specific school system.

In a study by Camp (1986-94) supply and demand of agricultural education professionals nationwide was established This study encompassed a span of 9 years, from 1986 to 1994. The number of agricultural education graduates in Oklahoma ranged from a low of 28 in 1993 to a high of 48 in 1985 The number of graduates placed in vocational agriculture teaching by September 1st of the graduation year ranged from a low in 1993 of 8 (28.6 percent) to a high of 30 (62.5 percent) in 1985 The number of graduates was parallel with the number placed for these years Turnover rates of current teacher for these years was consistent from 1986 to 1994.

Summary

This literature provided a clear picture of: (1) similar research conducted in this study area; (2) the recruitment processed used by other areas of education to increase and enhance recruitment and retention; (3) the job satisfaction of agricultural education instructors; and (4) the status of supply and demand for agricultural education instructors.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

Methodology

For this study to be effective, it was essential that a current population be identified, so that accurate and relevant data could be obtained.

Procedures for this study, in order to obtain useful and accurate information, were as follows.

(1) Determine a valid population

(2) Develop a suitable instrument for data collection

(3) Secure names and addresses of selected population

(4) Determine data analysis methods

Instrument design and development

After the review of similar studies conducted, the researcher identified an instrument suitable for the purpose of this study The instrument was modeled after one used in an unpublished master thesis by Disney H. Reece (1976) entitled, *Factors influencing vocational agriculture teachers to leave the vocational agriculture teaching profession in Oklahoma between the years 1970 - 1976.* This instrument aided in the format and development of the instrument for this study A panel of experts in the field was used to develop and refine the research instrument. Additional information for

questionnaire development was obtained through the use of former agricultural education teachers, as well as those teachers still in the profession. A copy was distributed to a random sample of these individuals. Additions and corrections were made, and the final questionnaire was produced for approval and distribution. The researcher designed the instrument to provide data which would complete the listed objectives.

The questionnaire was designed to first identify background information about the individual and their teaching experience. It was felt that a standard questionnaire, requiring the least amount of time on the part of the individual, would receive the best responses. Structure was necessary to establish a research tool that contained data which could be utilized for this study.

Population

In preparing for this study, it was necessary that the researcher obtain a list of those agricultural education instructors who had left the teaching profession between January 1, 1987 and August 1, 1997. The researcher obtained the agricultural education teacher directories from each of the study years. Those individuals not listed in the 1997 directory, but in other years, were determined to have left the profession and included in the study Comparing the current list of agricultural education teachers in Oklahoma with previous years' directories provided a list of those teachers that left the profession in this time frame. A total of 125 individuals were found that fit the listed criteria for the study Publications and rosters produced by the Oklahoma Department of Vocational Technical

Education (ODVTE) also were beneficial in providing names of those teachers who had left the agricultural education teaching profession during the years 1987 to 1997. The entire population was surveyed.

Instrument description

The instrument, listed in *Appendix A*, began with a series of background information questions. The remaining portion of the instrument allowed individuals to select among factors related to job satisfaction the level of each. This level ranged on a five point scale from "very important" to "not important at all". These questions were divided into 8 specific areas of focus, including; (1) school environment; (2) community environment; (3) family environment; (4) state department environment; (5) teaching responsibilities; (6) salary; (7) personal issues; and (8) overall satisfaction In each of these areas there were specific questions about the different aspects of the agricultural education profession Each also contained areas for other criteria and factors to be defined by the individual

Data gathering procedures

Data was collected through a mailed questionnaire to all of those individuals identified to have left the profession between the years 1987 and 1997 Addresses were obtained by use of the Internet and the phone book capabilities on the world wide web Duplicates were sent to more than one individual with the same name. resulting in 200

total questionnaire mailings to the 125 identified individuals. A follow-up mailing was not conducted.

Analysis of Data

The data collected was used statistically to establish the relationships between listed satisfaction factors and the ultimate decision by the individual(s) to leave the agricultural education teaching profession. Statistical data was established using descriptive statistics. Frequency distribution, mean and percentages were utilized to interpret the data.

The scale for the study was identical for all of the sections with one set of criteria. The following scale was used in the assignment of importance.

Extreme Importance	Strong Importance	Moderate Importance	Little Importance	No Importance
5	4	3	2	1

The true value limits established for each category were as follows:

4.5 to 5.0	Extreme Importance
3.5 to 4.49	Strong Importance
2.5 to 3 49	Moderate Importance
1.5 to 2.49	Little Importance
1 to 1 49	No Importance

Institutional Review Board

Through the revision process, the final instrument was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Federal regulations and Oklahoma State University policy requires review and approval of all studies involving human subjects before investigators begin their research. The Oklahoma State University Research Services and the IRB conduct this review to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects involved in the aforementioned policy This study received the proper surveillance, was granted permission to continue, and assigned the following number: AG-98-024.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The results of the study were divided into eight sections. The eight sections corresponded to the eight sections on the questionnaire, as well as the six objectives of the research study previously outlined. These sections were: (1) School Environment (2) Community Environment (3) Family Environment (4) State Department Environment (5) Teaching Responsibilities (6) Salary (7) Personal Issues (8) Overall Satisfaction.

Of the 125 questionnaires mailed, 92 (75%) were returned. Two of the responses were unusable because they were improperly completed, leaving a total of 90 returned questionnaires. A total of 90 (72%) questionnaires were used for the data analysis. To completely and accurately present the data, various tables were formulated. Variances in "N" values throughout this study were the result of non responses by respondents on questionnaire areas.

Population Descriptive Data

Only three population identifying questions were included in the study, in order to minimize the ability of the researcher to identify individual participants The number of years teaching experience was one population identifying factor on the questionnaire, as reported in Table I. Teaching experience of the respondents ranged from one to thirty-three years Of those responding, 60 percent had ten years or fewer teaching experience. Table I shows the teaching experience distribution of the 90 respondents by level

TABLE I

TEACHING EXPERIENCE OF RESPONDENTS

YEARS	NUMBER	%
0-5	25	27.78%
6-10	30	33.33%
11-15	18	20.00%
15 - 33	17	18.89%
TOTAL	90	

TABLE II

NUMBER OF YEARS ANTICIPATED TEACHING WHEN ENTERING THE PROFESSION

YEARS	NUMBER	%
0-5	13	14.44%
6-10	21	23.33%
11-15	32	35.56%
15 - LIFETIME	24	26.67%
TOTAL	90	

Additional population data was derived from the respondents regarding the number of years they anticipated teaching upon entering the profession. The data for this question is show in Table II. This data ranged from a low of five years to a high of "a lifetime". More than 60% of the respondents indicated they had planned to teach 15 years or longer.

Current position was the final population data question, and allowed the researcher to identify the number of former teachers in related fields. In constructing Table III, the respondents were divided into four categories. Those remaining in the agriculture profession, those in education, those who have retired and other career areas. Forty-one percent of the respondents had remained in education, while 34 percent (31 respondents) are in the agriculture industry. Those retired constituted five percent of the respondents, while other occupations made up the remaining 20 percent.

School Environment

Section one of the questionnaire addressed the area of school administration and faculty relationships, as well as financial support by the administration of the ag program The question in this section receiving the greatest mean value was "administrative support of ag program", with 51% of the respondents placing this criteria in the extreme and strong categories (See Table IV). The mean value for this question was a 3.35, indicating a moderate importance level. The lowest relationship came from the question "attitude of other teachers in the school toward the program", with a mean value of 2.25. This indicates a level of little importance to the respondents leaving the teaching profession.

TABLE III

CURRENT PROFESSIONS OF RESPONDENTS

PROFESSION	NUMBER	%
AGRICULTURE	**31**	**34.44%**
Extension	3	3.33%
Teaching in other state	4	4.44%
Ag Sales	6	6.67%
Large Ag Corporation	7	7.78%
Production Agriculture	11	12.22%
EDUCATION	**37**	**41.11%**
Teaching another subject in Oklahoma	4	4.44%
Vocational Administration	16	17.78%
Principal - Secondary School	4	4.44%
Superintendent - Secondary School	2	2.22%
Other Education	11	12.22%
RETIRED	**7**	**7.78%**
OTHER FIELDS	**15**	**16.67%**
Banking / Finance	9	10.00%
Other	6	6.67%
TOTAL	**90**	**100.00%**

TABLE IV

RESPONSES REGARDING THE LEVEL PLACED UPON SELECTED AREAS OF "SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT" AS REASONS FOR LEAVING THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Areas of School Environment	Extreme Importance		Strong Importance		Moderate Importance		Little Importance		No Importance		Mean
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	
Administrative support of Ag program by school N - 78	24	31	18	20	9	12	15	19	12	18	3.35
Supervision of the Ag program by local school administration N - 90	22	24	15	17	19	21	15	17	19	21	3.07
Financial support of program by the school N - 89	12	13	18	20	22	25	22	25	15	17	2.89
Attitude of other teachers in the school system N - 90	3	3	18	20	12	13	23	26	34	38	2.25
Other N - 16	15	94	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	4.88

The complete data for section one is shown in Table IV.

Community Environment

Section two on the questionnaire addressed whether community related factors contribute to agricultural education teachers leaving the profession. This objective corresponded to the community environment section, questions one through seven, on the questionnaire.

Respondents chose from a list of community-related factors that potentially affected their decision to leave the teaching profession All of the responses in this section were in the "moderate" to "little" selection areas, with 4 in the "little" category and 3 in the "moderate" category (See Table V) Question number five, "overall community support", and question number six, "financial support by community of program", were the lowest response areas in this section. Number five indicated a 2.40 mean value, while number six was at 2.22 mean value, both in the "little" influence area (See Table V).

Family Environment

The family environment section, section three, addressed the relationship with family and the ultimate decision to leave the teaching profession One of the most surprising results from

this section was the question "time requirements away from family". Respondents indicated a "strong" relationship, with 62% of the responses in the "strong" and "extreme"

TABLE V

RESPONSES REGARDING THE LEVEL PLACED UPON SELECTED AREAS OF "COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT" AS REASONS FOR LEAVING THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Areas of Community Environment	Extreme Importance		Strong Importance		Moderate Importance		Little Importance		No Importance		Mean
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	
Time commitment to other community activities N - 87	12	14	18	21	9	10	21	24	27	31	2.62
Emphasis / expectations placed upon chapter success N - 90	6	7	21	23	10	11	31	34	22	25	2.53
Different expectations placed upon teachers versus community members N - 86	2	2	24	28	15	17	12	14	33	39	2.42
Overall Community support N - 90	6	7	21	23	6	7	27	30	30	33	2.40
Pressure from community to expand and / or change program direction N - 87	6	7	9	10	21	24	18	21	33	38	2.28
Financial support by community of program N - 86	6	7	15	19	3	4	24	30	33	40	2.22
Other N - 12	5	42	1	8	0	0	0	0	6	50	2.92

TABLE VI

RESPONSES REGARDING THE LEVEL PLACED UPON SELECTED OF "FAMILY ENVIRONMENT" AS REASONS FOR LEAVING THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Areas of Family Environment	Extreme Importance		Strong Importance		Moderate Importance		Little Importance		No Importance		Mean
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	
Time requirements away from family N - 87	27	31	27	31	15	17	12	14	6	7	3.83
Social life restrictions due to job duties N - 87	12	14	27	31	18	21	15	17	15	17	3.07
Requirements for family involvement in community activities N - 90	12	13	12	13	24	28	21	23	21	23	2.70
Education / Employment opportunities for spouse N - 87	9	10	12	14	18	21	6	7	42	48	2.31
Health status of family N - 84	9	11	3	4	12	14	12	14	48	57	2.10
Other N - 3	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5.00

areas (See Table VI). Respondents also indicated a 3.83 mean value, placing this question in the "strong" category Table VI shows the complete data for this section.

State Department Environment

Section four dealt with the Oklahoma department of vocational-technical education, and the relationship this had with the respondent leaving the teaching profession. Question number one, "support of state staff for your program", indicated a mean value of 2.93, and 24% of the responses in the "extreme" category (See Table VII). Other comments in this section had a mean value of 4.75, with responses including "lack of support from state staff for expected changes" and "no loyalty to the teachers" Complete data for this section is shown in Table VII.

Teaching Responsibilities

The teaching responsibilities section, section five, included thirteen questions directed toward the respondent's relationship with many of the daily teaching responsibilities of an agricultural education instructor. The lowest question in this section was entitled "including 4-H students in SAE activities" Respondents indicated a mean value of 1.99 on this response, with 59% indicating "none" as the relationship with leaving the profession (See Table VIII). The highest response in this category was "rapport with administration", with 27% of the respondents

TABLE VII

RESPONSES REGARDING THE LEVEL PLACED UPON SELECTED AREAS OF
"STATE DEPARTMENT ENVIRONMENT"
AS REASONS FOR LEAVING THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Areas of State Department	Extreme Importance		Strong Importance		Moderate Importance		Little Importance		No Importance		Mean
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	
Support of state staff of your program N - 87	21	24	15	17	12	14	15	17	24	28	2.93
Meeting requirements by state department N - 90	9	10	18	20	21	23	21	23	21	23	2.70
Other N - 12	9	75	3	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.75

TABLE IIIV

RESPONSES REGARDING THE LEVEL PLACED UPON SELECTED AREAS OF "TEACHING RESPONSIBILITIES" AS REASONS FOR LEAVING THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Areas of Teaching Responsibilities	Extreme Importance		Strong Importance		Moderate Importance		Little Importance		No Importance		Mean
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	
Rapport with adminsitration N - 90	24	27	8	9	20	22	14	16	24	26	2.93
Livestock show and selection requirements N - 89	13	15	16	18	19	21	8	9	33	37	2.64
Troublesome students placed in program by administration without instructor approval N - 90	9	10	22	24	16	18	13	14	30	34	2.63
Student Discipline N - 84	6	7	19	23	18	21	16	19	25	30	2.58
Curriculum development requirements for different classe N - 89	7	8	18	20	24	27	7	8	33	37	2.54
Extra-Curricular duties N - 83	6	7	23	28	8	10	16	19	30	36	2.51
Coordinating and conducting fundraisers N - 88	8	9	10	11	24	27	16	18	30	35	2.43
FFA contest and meeting requirements N - 90	4	4	19	21	14	16	23	26	30	33	2.38

Table IIIV, Continued

TABLE IIIV

RESPONSES REGARDING THE LEVEL PLACED UPON SELECTED AREAS OF "TEACHING RESPONSIBILITIES" AS REASONS FOR LEAVING THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Areas of Teaching Responsibilities	Extreme Importance		Strong Importance		Moderate Importance		Little Importance		No Importance		Mean
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	
Safety concerns with students in shop / laboratory N - 88	4	5	12	14	18	20	12	14	42	47	2.34
School farm upkeep and maintenance N - 86	3	3	16	19	19	22	3	3	45	53	2.17
SAE integration into classroom activities N - 79	3	4	13	16	16	20	9	11	38	49	2.16
Including 4-H students in SAE activities N - 88	6	7	10	11	13	15	7	8	52	59	1.99
Other N - 21	13	62	5	24	0	0	0	0	3	14	4.19

placing this in the "extreme" category. The complete data for this section is shown in Table VIII.

Salary

Salary was examined in section six, with three questions concerning salary as it related to leaving the teaching profession. Section six attempted to derive information from the respondents based upon salary levels of agricultural education teachers. Question number one,"Base salary too low for job responsibilities", found 52% of the respondents in the "extreme" and "strong" categories at a mean value of 3.20 (See Table IX) "Yearly increase not enough compensation" was question two, and elicited similar responses as question one from the respondents Fifty-two percent placed this question in the "extreme" and "strong" categories, with a mean value of 3.40 The final question in this section, "professional dues not reimbursed", indicated a 2.58 mean value Thirty-four percent of the respondents placed this question in the "none" category of importance. The complete data for this section is shown in Table IX

Personal Issues

Another aspect of this study examined the personal issues that impacted the respondent's decision to leave the teaching profession. The question "desire for more personal and job growth" was the highest response in this category, with 50% of the respondents in the "strong" and "extreme" categories. A mean score of 3.26 was reported

TABLE IX

RESPONSES REGARDING THE LEVEL PLACED UPON SELECTED AREAS OF "SALARY" AS REASONS FOR LEAVING THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Areas of Salary	Extreme Importance		Strong Importance		Moderate Importance		Little Importance		No Importance		Mean
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	
Yearly increases not enough compensation N - 90	25	28	22	24	20	22	10	11	13	15	3.40
Base salary too low for job responsibilities N - 87	20	23	25	29	11	13	14	16	17	19	3.20
Professional dues not reimbursed N - 88	16	18	7	8	19	22	16	18	30	34	2.58

TABLE X

RESPONSES REGARDING THE LEVEL PLACED UPON SELECTED AREAS OF "PERSONAL ISSUES" AS REASONS FOR LEAVING THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Areas of Personal Issues	Extreme Importance		Strong Importance		Moderate Importance		Little Importance		No Importance		Mean
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	
Desire for more personal / job growth N - 88	31	35	13	15	11	13	14	16	19	21	3.26
Desired set working hours N - 89	28	31	10	11	19	21	7	8	25	29	3.10
Opportunity to return home and continue family business N - 89	6	7	4	14	22	25	13	15	44	49	2.04
Unhappy with teaching as a career choice N - 89	7	8	0	0	8	9	19	21	55	62	1.70

on this question as well (See Table

X). The lowest response was "unhappy with teaching as a profession". Sixty-two percent of the respondents placed this in the "none" category, with a 1 70 mean score. The complete data for section seven is shown in Table X.

Overall Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction was the final reason investigated. The two primary questions in this area were "when entering the teaching profession" and "upon leaving the teaching profession" The first question resulted in the highest mean score for the instrument of a 4.10. Eighty percent of the respondents were in the "extreme" and "strong" areas (See Table XI). The second question concerning satisfaction upon leaving the teaching profession resulted in a 3.32 mean. The complete data for section eight is shown in Table XI.

TABLE XI

RESPONSES REGARDING THE LEVEL PLACED UPON SELECTED AREAS OF "OVERALL SATISFACTION" AS REASONS FOR LEAVING THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Overall Satisfaction	Extreme Importance		Strong Importance		Moderate Importance		Little Importance		No Importance		Mean
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	
When entering the teaching profession N - 90	40	45	31	35	11	12	4	4	4	4	4.10
Upon leaving the teaching profession N - 90	20	22	23	26	23	26	14	16	10	10	3.32
Other N - 14	10	71	0	0	4	29	0	0	0	0	4.43

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The basic focus of this study was, "What selected factors influence agricultural education instructors to leave the teaching profession?" Indications were that several of the questionnaire areas exhibited a moderate to high level of relationship with the teacher leaving the profession.

The purpose of this study was to determine why Oklahoma agricultural education has lost a consistent number of professionals to other occupations in recent years. Specifically identifying those areas that the former teachers felt were most influential in their ultimate decision to leave the teaching profession.

Objectives

The objectives of this study were to.

(1) Determine community related factors which contribute to agricultural education teachers leaving the profession

(2) Determine school and teaching related factors which contribute to agricultural education teachers leaving the profession.

(3) Determine personal factors which contribute to agricultural education teachers leaving the profession.

(4) Determine the perceptions of agricultural education as a career by those teachers who have left the profession.

(5) Determine family related factors which contribute to agricultural education teachers

leaving the profession.

(6) Determine if changes in job responsibilities and requirements contribute to teachers leaving the profession.

The following seven questionnaire areas addressed the objectives through.

(1) School Environment

(2) Community Environment

(3) Family Environment

(4) State Department Environment

(5) Teaching Responsibilities

(6) Salary

(7) Personal Issues

The importance for each of these areas by the respondents varied based upon personal preferences and experience. Table XII shows the average mean distribution placed upon the importance of each of these areas by the respondents

Summary of Findings

Responses to the 44 questionnaire questions designed to answer the six research objectives were tabulated from the 90 respondents identified through the study A breakdown of the response level for specific questions yielded data for degrees of importance. In the level of extreme importance, no questions were found with a mean value high enough to be placed in this category other than the "other" responses. The

TABLE XII

IMPORTANCE PLACED UPON SELECTED AREAS
BY RESPONDENT MEAN VALUE

AREA OF SATISFACTION	MEAN VALUE
SALARY	**3.06**
SCHOOL	**2.89**
STATE DEPARTMENT	**2.82**
FAMILY	**2.80**
PERSONAL ISSUES	**2.53**
TEACHING RESPONSIBILITIES	**2.44**
COMMUNITY	**2.41**

strong importance level indicated no responses as well. In the upper moderate level (3.00 to 3.49 mean value) there were several responses that were deemed by the respondents related to their leaving the teaching profession. The following list shows those questions that were in the high moderate category.

The eight areas of focus on the questionnaire indicated various levels of importance based upon individual needs Table XIII shows a complete distribution of the above importance areas. The "School Environment" category had two questions above listed in the high moderate level. Community Environment had no responses in the upper moderate category. Family Environment indicated two questions above as of high moderate importance. State department environment had no responses in the high moderate category. Teaching responsibilities had no responses in the high moderate category. Salary had two questions above listed as of high moderate importance. Personal issues involved two questions above, and completed the list of high moderate mean responses The majority of the remaining question responses were in the low moderate and little levels of importance

Conclusions

Although many factors are responsible for influencing teachers of agricultural education to leave the teaching profession, some of them may have been revealed in this study due to the limiting factor of the questions asked. Those questions in the high moderate level were deemed by the researcher to be most relevant in the formation of conclusions from this study

TABLE XIII

RESPONSES PLACED UPON SELECTED AREAS
IN THE HIGH MODERATE MEAN VALUE

AREA OF SATISFACTION	MEAN VALUE
Time Requirements away from Family	**3.83**
Yearly Increases not Enough Compenstation	**3.40**
Administrative Support of Ag Program by School	**3.35**
Desire for more Personal / Job Growth	**3.26**
Base Salary too low for Job Expectations	**3.20**
Desired Set Working Hours	**3.10**
Social Life Restrictions due to Job Duties	**3.07**
Supervision of the Ag Program by Local School Adminstration	**3.07**

Conclusion #1

The local school administrative environment plays an important role in the agricultural education teachers' ultimate success and decision to remain in the profession. Administrative support of the agricultural education program by the school is vital to a successful teaching experience Positive and well-structured supervision by the local administration of the agriculture teacher is equally important in terms of the teacher remaining in the profession.

Conclusion #2

The attitude of the community has little impact on an agriculture teacher deciding to leave the teaching profession. Community environmental factors such as chapter expectations and community support were found to also be of little importance. Time commitment to community activities and financial support of the program by the community had little impact on the teacher leaving the profession.

Conclusion #3

Time requirements away from the teacher's family plays a role in the decision to leave the profession. The desire of the teacher to spend more time with his or her family is critical to their decision to remain teaching. Restrictions placed upon an individual teacher regarding their social life after school hours also contributes to the decision to leave the

teaching profession.

Conclusion #4

The state department has a responsibility to continue to support agricultural education teachers within their local school systems The support indicated by the respondents indicated a low moderate relationship to leaving the profession.

Conclusion #5

Specific teaching responsibilities of agricultural education teachers has little impact on their decision to leave the teaching profession. The freedom in curriculum direction and design allows for flexibility in class planning and direction. FFA contests and SAE projects showed no indication that the duties related to these affected the teacher leaving the profession.

Conclusion #6

Salary is a determining factor in the decision to remain in the teaching profession. Yearly increases in base pay are not sufficient compensation to remain in the profession. The base salary for agricultural education instructors is, to a lesser degree, also directly related to teachers leaving the profession.

Conclusion #7

The hours outside of the classroom required for the position of an agricultural education instructor contributes to leaving teaching. Set working hours are desired by teachers impact their decision to remain in their teaching position. The desire on the part of individual teachers to leave the profession for more personal and job growth will continue to be a factor in teachers leaving the profession.

Recommendations

Agricultural education instructors live in a fast paced, high stress world. The duties and requirements for their positions extend far beyond the boundaries of a normal classroom teacher In order for the teacher to remain in the profession he must have support. The local school administration must be encouraged to be supportive of the agriculture program that is in place at their school Agricultural education teachers need the help of state staff and other respected entities to make these influential changes in the mind set of local school administration In-service for school administrators concerning the philosophy, direction and goals of agricultural education could be implemented on a state wide level at principal and superintendent conferences.

Agriculture teachers need to spend time with their family in order to remain in the profession. The time requirements for FFA and SAE activities are likely to remain the same, so we must help educate those teachers about family time requirements The married teacher conference conducted for student teachers by the Oklahoma State

University Agricultural Education department is very effective. We need to provide additional counseling and support for those teachers in the field struggling with family time requirement issues.

Salary has an impact on the level of job satisfaction and ultimate decision to leave teaching. The base salary for agricultural education instructors is $32,000 per year. This salary is almost double what it was fifteen years ago. It is highly unlikely that salary will increase in the near future. Undergraduate agricultural education majors need to be made aware of the financial obligations of the future. Buying a home, marriage, children, and other bills can make what appears to be a lot of money seem impossible to live on once the teacher is in the field Financial planning would be beneficial to beginning teachers to come to grips with their financial status

The desire for set working hours by agriculture teachers will continue to cause teachers to leave the profession. Prospective agricultural education teachers must be made aware that their day truly begins at 3:30 p.m. when the school bell rings. Student teaching at sites that are extremely active would be a good way to orient those young teachers to the hours they will be expected to put in as an agricultural education teacher

Agricultural Education has one of the strongest teacher network of any vocational group Teachers continually draw advice, expertise and help from fellow teachers in the field. This network must be maintained for the individual teacher to be successful In-service and professional improvement activities should be geared to foster that team spirit, and let each individual teacher know that they are not alone in this profession

Future research in the area of Agricultural Education teacher retention should focus on identifying trends that result in teachers leaving the profession. Research should

focus on establishing whether the factors used in this study are still reasons to leave the profession at the time of future research. Recommendations for action should be made that are not only realistic but achievable

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Agricultural Education Survey

Background Information

Present Occupation:_____

Number of years teaching experience:_____

How many years did you plan on teaching when you entered the profession?:_____

PLEASE RANK THE FOLLOWING FACTORS ACCORDING TO THEIR IMPORTANCE TO YOU LEAVING THE TEACHING PROFESSION.

Scale

5 = Extreme Importance
4 = Strong Importance
3 = Moderate Importance
2 = Little Importance
1 = No Importance

		EXTREME	STRONG	MODERATE	LITTLE	NONE
School Environment						
1	Attitude of other teachers in the school system	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Administrative support of Ag program by school	5	4	3	2	1
3	Supervision of the Ag program by local school administration	5	4	3	2	1
4	Financial support of the program by the school	5	4	3	2	1
5	Other (Please specify) _____	5	4	3	2	1
Community Environment						
1	Time commitment to other community activities	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Emphasis / Expectations placed upon chapter success.	5	4	3	2	1
3	Pressure from community to expand and/or change program direction	5	4	3	2	1
4	Different expectations placed upon teachers versus community members	5	4	3	2	1
5	Overall community support	5	4	3	2	1

6.	Financial support by commmunity of program	5	4	3	2	1
7.	Other (Please specify) _____	5	4	3	2	1

Family Environment

1.	Requirements for family involvement in community activities	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Health status of family	5	4	3	2	1
3	Time requirements away from family	5	4	3	2	1
4.	Social life restrictions due to job duties	5	4	3	2	1
5	Education / Employment opportunities for spouse	5	4	3	2	1
6.	Other (Please specify) _____	5	4	3	2	1

State Department Environment

1.	Support of state staff for your program	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Meeting requirements by state department	5	4	3	2	1
3	Other (Please specify) _____	5	4	3	2	1

Teaching Responsibilities

1	Safety concerns with students in shop / laboratory	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Curriculum development requirements for different classes	5	4	3	2	1
3	Student discipline	5	4	3	2	1
4.	Extra-curricular duties (working sporting events, class sponsor, etc)	5	4	3	2	1
5	SAE integration into classroom activities	5	4	3	2	1
6.	School farm upkeep and maintenance (if app.)	5	4	3	2	1
7	Including 4-H students in SAE activities	5	4	3	2	1
8	Troublesome students placed in program by administration with instructor approval	5	4	3	2	1
9.	Rapport with administration					

10	Coordinating and conducting fundraisers	5	4	3	2	1
11	FFA contest and meeting requirements	5	4	3	2	1
12	Livestock show and selection requirements	5	4	3	2	1
13	Other (Please specify) _____	5	4	3	2	1
Salary						
1	Base salary too low for job responsibilities	5	4	3	2	1
2	Yearly increases not enough compensation	5	4	3	2	1
3	Professional dues not reimbursed	5	4	3	2	1
Personal Issues						
1	Opportunity to return home and continue family business	5	4	3	2	1
2	Desire for more personal / job growth	5	4	3	2	1
3	Desired set working hours	5	4	3	2	1
4	Unhappy with teaching as a career choice	5	4	3	2	1
Overall Satisfaction						
1	When entering the teaching profession	5	4	3	2	1
2	Upon leaving the teaching profession	5	4	3	2	1
3	Other (Please specify) _____	5	4	3	2	1

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER

February 5, 1998

Dear former Ag teacher,

I am conducting a study of the factors influencing Agricultural Education teachers to leave the profession. As a former agriculture teacher, such as myself, your input into this study would be very beneficial to current and future agriculture instructors. The data collected from this questionnaire will be used to evaluate and restructure some of the causes of teachers leaving the profession.

Please take a few minutes to complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it in the pre-addressed stamped envelope by **February 13th, 1998.** No participants in this questionnaire will be identified in the data used in the study. Your contribution is important. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Eaton
Assistant Director of Curriculum
Autry Technology Center
Enid, Oklahoma

APPENDIX C

INSTITUITIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: January 21, 1998 **IRB #: AG-98-024**

Proposal Title: FACTORS INFLUENCING AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION TEACHER RETENTION IN OKLAHOMA

Principal Investigator(s): James Key, Jeremy Eaton

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE APPROVAL PERIOD.
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.
ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

==========

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature: _____ Date: January 23, 1998
Chair of Institutional Review Board
Cc: Jeremy Eaton

VITA

JEREMY DEAN EATON

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: SELECTED FACTORS INFLUENCING AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TO LEAVE THE PROFESSION IN OKLAHOMA

Major Field: Agricultural Education

Biographical:

Personal Data. Born in Kingfisher, Oklahoma, August 8, 1971 the son of Clifford "Butch" Eaton Jr and Francene Eaton.

Education Graduated from Cashion High School, Cashion, Oklahoma, in May, 1989; received Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Education from Oklahoma State University in May, 1994; completed the requirements for the Master of Science degree at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 1998

Professional Experience: Agricultural Education Instructor, Canton High School, Canton, Oklahoma, July 1994 to July 1996, Administrative Intern, Autry Technology Center, Enid, Oklahoma, August 1996 to June 1997; Assistant Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Autry Technology Center, Enid, Oklahoma, July 1997 to present

Professional Organizations Oklahoma Vocational Association, American Vocational Association, National Association of Secondary School Principals.