

Job Satisfaction of Mid-Career Agricultural Educators Participating in the NAAE XLR8 Program

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Introduction/ Need for the Study

The educational system in the United States is facing an ongoing challenge of keeping teachers in the profession. It is estimated that around half a million teachers move or leave the profession every year (Haynes, 2014). A report by Ingersoll, Merrill, and Stuckey (2014) illustrated that more than 41 percent of all educators will leave teaching within the first five years after entering their classrooms. The field of agricultural education is of particular concern, as there currently is a national shortage of highly qualified teachers. The recently released Executive Summary of the National Agricultural Education Supply and Demand Study reported that there were 1,476 openings in 2016, but only 772 license-eligible program completers (Smith, Lawver, & Foster, 2017). The report also stated that, of the 721 agriculture teachers who taught in 2015-16, 72% of those teachers left for reasons other than retirement (Smith, et al., 2017).

Several studies have been published attempting to explain why agricultural educators are leaving the classroom and many of these studies focus on entry-level teachers. The results indicate that compensation, burnout, family issues, discipline problems in the classroom, low degree of self-efficacy, and poor time-management skills are several reasons agriculture teachers leave the profession (Boone & Boone, 2009; Chenevey, Ewing, & Whittington, 2008; Myers, Dyer, & Washburn, (2005); Whittington, McConnell, & Knobloch, 2006). With that being said, there is little literature focusing on why mid-career teachers are choosing to leave the profession and specifically what facets of the job they are unsatisfied with, that may have an impact on that decision. This particular study's purpose was to determine levels of job satisfaction of mid-career agriculture educators participating in the NAAE XLR8 program. XLR8 is a program designed for agricultural educators in their 7th-15th year with increasing teacher longevity and satisfaction with their teaching career as one of its primary goals (National Association of Agricultural Educators, n.d.). Specific objectives of the study were to 1) identify demographic information of the XLR8 participants, 2) determine levels of job satisfaction of the participants, and 3) compare and contrast job satisfaction findings based on demographic characteristics.

Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded in Herzberg, Mausner, and Synderman's Motivator-Hygiene Theory (1959). This theory postulates that all jobs have areas that lead to satisfaction or dissatisfaction of that career. The "motivator", or satisfaction, factors were levels of achievement, advancement, recognition, responsibility, and the work itself. The "hygiene", or dissatisfaction, factors were those related to interpersonal relationships, policy, salary, level of supervision, and working conditions. According to the theory, hygiene factors do not create satisfaction, but the lack of them causes job dissatisfaction. Herzberg (1959) also informed us that the motivating factors were a strong indication of satisfaction and that they have a lasting effect, unlike the hygiene factors, which only produced short-term changes in job satisfaction.

Methodology

This descriptive quantitative study sought to determine levels of job satisfaction amongst mid-career agricultural educators. The target sample population for the study was the 2016 National Association of Agricultural Educators XLR8 participants ($N = 20$). An online survey was administered to the XLR8 participants prior to the conference. The instrument was designed to gather demographic data as well as determine levels of job satisfaction. The Brayfield- Rothe Job Satisfaction Index as modified by Warner (1973) was utilized to determine levels of overall job satisfaction as well as examine specific aspects of one's job. Eighteen completed the survey

for a response rate of 90.0%. Data were analyzed using Predictive Analytics Software (PASW) v18. Demographic data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies and percentages). The demographic data were used to categorize potential leavers (those that have looked for a job outside of teaching) and the stayers (those that have not). Independent level t-tests were used to calculate means, standard deviations, and to determine significant differences using *a priori* ($p < .05$) of the established groups.

Results/Findings

Those participating in the 2016 XLR8 conference were 55.6% female ($n=10$) and 44.4% ($n=8$) male. Of the participants, 72.2% ($n=13$) completed a traditional teacher certification program, while 27.8% ($n=5$) were alternatively certified. Just over half (55.6%, $n=10$) of the participants explored other career options within the past year. These participants either looked at job postings, applied for another job, and/or were offered a job outside of teaching. Overall, the participants were satisfied with their job ($M=3.72$, $SD=.31$) and there were no significant differences among leavers and stayers. However, the results did show a statistically significant difference in levels of job satisfaction as it related to the recognition they received and their satisfaction with their school policies & administration (Table 2).

Table 2. Levels of Job Satisfaction with Specific Facets of the Job amongst Those Contemplating Leaving and Those Whom Are Not ($n=18$)

Specific Job Satisfaction Factors	Leavers ($n = 10$)		Stayers ($n = 8$)		t-test	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
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
Interpersonal Relationships	4.60	1.17	4.75	1.23	-.26	.80
School Policy and Admin.	2.70	1.57	4.63	1.06	-2.97	.01
Salary	3.20	1.62	3.25	1.49	-.07	.95
Level of Supervision	4.50	1.35	4.63	.74	-.23	.82
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

Conclusions/ Implications/ Recommendations

It can be concluded that the mid-career agricultural educators that participated in XLR8 were more satisfied, than dissatisfied with their job. There were no significant differences in overall job satisfaction between those contemplating leaving the classroom and those who weren't. The data did show differences between the groups in the areas of satisfaction of recognition and school policy and administration. The results will be shared with the NAAE staff to help evaluate and develop future XLR8 programming. This information could also potentially be shared with state leaders as a potential data point when developing an agricultural educator teacher retention plan. It is recommended that the study is replicated nationally to gain a better understanding of agriculture teacher job satisfaction.

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