

Help! Determining the FFA and SAE Professional Development Needs of Louisiana Agriculture Teachers by Years of Teaching Experience

Introduction

While education is always changing for every type of educator, for an agriculture teacher the change can be much more drastic. With rapidly changing standards and expectations, professional development workshops for educators are imperative. Departments of agricultural education have had the purpose of identifying and delivering important in-service workshops to agriculture teachers (Barrick, Ludewig, & Hedges, 1983). However, workshop designers often have had difficulties in identifying the most relevant topics (Birkenholz & Harbstreet, 1987; Washburn, et al., 2001). Specifically, FFA and SAE professional development needs vary from teacher to teacher based on years of teaching experience. Research has indicated that early career teachers often desire professional development over implementing SAE programs and advising FFA members (Layfield & Dobbins, 2002). However, experienced teachers have reported desire for professional development in (a) preparing FFA degree applications, (b) Career Development Event (CDE) training, (c) preparing proficiency award applications, (d) utilizing computers/multimedia, and (e) teaching record keeping skills (Layfield & Dobbins, 2002).

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The Theory of Andragogy served as the theoretical framework underpinning this study. The core premise of andragogy is that adult learners have different needs, wants, and desires for learning experiences than do young students (Knowles, 1980; Knowles, Holton III, & Swanson, 2015). Per the model, teachers' professional development needs may differ depending on career stage. The literature review revealed that scholars in agricultural education have assessed the professional development needs of agriculture teachers for many years. Research commonalities have been noted, but professional development needs can vary by state, years of experience, and career stage (Birkenholz & Harbstreet, 1987; Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Layfield & Dobbins, 2002; Roberts & Dyer, 2004; Washburn et al. 2006). Additionally, a comprehensive study of the FFA and SAE related professional development needs of Louisiana agriculture teachers has not occurred in the past 20 years. The principle research that arose from the review of literature was: how do the FFA and SAE professional development needs of Louisiana agriculture teachers vary by years of teaching experience?

Methods

The target population of this study was all Louisiana agricultural educators actively working during the 2017–2018 academic year (N = 261). Data were collected, with a paper instrument delivered by the researcher at each of the three Louisiana FFA Leadership Camp sessions in July 2017. In all, 190 advisors registered for camp and 164 finished the survey, which yielded 86.0% response rate, representing 62.8% of the total agriculture teacher population in Louisiana. No attempt to collect data from those who did not attend a camp session was attempted because an accurate frame (i.e., directory) of agriculture teachers was not available at the time of data collection. The instrument consisted of six sections, (a) instruction/curriculum, (b) technical agriculture, (c) Career/Leadership Development Events, (d) SAE, (e) program management, and (f) teacher characteristics. For the purpose of this study, only Career/Leadership Development Events, SAE, and Program Management are reported. Data

were analyzed utilizing SPSS version 24.

Results

Table 1 highlights the perceived FFA and SAE needs of Louisiana agriculture teachers. Agriculture teachers with 1 – 5 years of experience reported *Career Development Events* ($M = 2.44$), and *Leadership Development Events* ($M = 2.41$) were in need of some professional development. Teachers with 6 – 25 years of experience reported some professional development needs in *Leadership Development Events*, and *Program Management*. Finally, teachers with 26+ years of experience responded with some need in *Career Development Events* ($M = 1.96$), and *Program Management* ($M = 1.98$).

Table 1
Perceived FFA and SAE Needs of Louisiana Agriculture Teachers

| Item | Years of Experience | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|------|------|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|------|------------|------|
| | 1–5 | | 6–10 | | 11–15 | | 16–20 | | 21–25 | | 26 or more | |
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| Career Development Events | 2.44 | 0.92 | 2.40 | 0.89 | 2.03 | 0.88 | 1.77 | 0.94 | 2.16 | 0.90 | 1.96 | 0.71 |
| Leadership Development Events | 2.41 | 0.97 | 2.42 | 0.90 | 2.16 | 1.01 | 1.85 | 0.86 | 2.21 | 1.11 | 1.90 | 0.86 |
| Program Management Supervised Agriculture Experience | 2.37 | 0.90 | 2.70 | 0.96 | 2.24 | 1.14 | 1.87 | 0.87 | 2.19 | 1.02 | 1.98 | 0.84 |
| | 2.03 | 0.84 | 2.33 | 0.70 | 2.02 | 0.84 | 1.45 | 0.92 | 2.08 | 0.79 | 1.49 | 0.83 |

Note. Note. Real limits: No Need = 0 – 0.49; Little Need = 0.50 – 1.49; Some Need = 1.50 – 2.49; Much Need = 2.50 – 3.49; Highest Need = 3.50 – 4.00

Conclusions/Implications/Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to identify FFA and SAE professional development needs of Louisiana agriculture teachers by years of experience. Table 3 sought to identify FFA and SAE related professional development needs of Louisiana agriculture teachers by years of experience. All items were reported in need of some or much professional development by all categories of teachers. Previous research concluded that experienced teachers needed professional development in performing FFA related activities, such as degree applications and award applications (Garton & Chung, 1996; Layfield & Dobbins, 2002; Joerger, 2002; Peiter, Terry & Cartmell, 2003; Duncan et al., 2006). However, previous research has indicated that novice teachers need the greatest professional development needs in SAE related activities (Layfield & Dobbs, 2002). Based on this research the authors recommend that this information be shared with state agricultural education staff, Louisiana Agriculture Teachers' Association, and anyone else who offers professional development for agriculture teachers. It is also recommended that professional development workshops be tailored to specific years of teaching experience. One size fits all professional development workshops may not be the most effective way to deliver quality professional development to all career stages.

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