

Idaho Teacher Perceptions of Content Area Needs for New Agricultural Education Graduates

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Introduction

- Agricultural education is a profession requiring a wide breadth of content knowledge reflecting the “dynamic and ever-changing industry of agriculture” (Phipps, Osborne, Dyer & Ball, p. 7, 2008).
- Only one state had a list of content competencies required for endorsement in agricultural education.
- Current teachers are often best positioned to provide feedback to teacher educators, as they can gauge their own preparation with the demands of the profession (Touchstone, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

- A portion of Mishra and Koelher’s (2006) concept of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK).
- We utilized the content knowledge of existing teachers and asked them to identify the most important portions of content upon entering the classroom.

Methods

- Census of all agricultural educators in Idaho ($N = 149$).
- Online descriptive survey
- Instrument included one demographic section, seven sections related to the importance of technical agricultural content items, and a section on importance of topics related to FFA and Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE)
- Respondents rated each content item on a scale from 1 (not at all important) to 4 (extremely important).
- $n = 88$ respondents (59.0% response rate)

Findings

- Mean overall content area rating was $M = 3.36$ ($sd = 0.79$)
- Similarities existed in ranking regardless of whether respondent taught in the content area
- Highest rated areas were misaligned with the current Technical Skills Assessment (TSA) test weighting for five of seven content areas

Implications/Discussion

- Teacher education programs must be in a process of continual evolution to effectively meet the needs of modern agricultural education
- Gathering information from inservice teachers is the beginning of that appraisal

Inservice agricultural educators rated **most** content topics **important** for new teachers to know. Highest ranked items **did not match** state test weightings.



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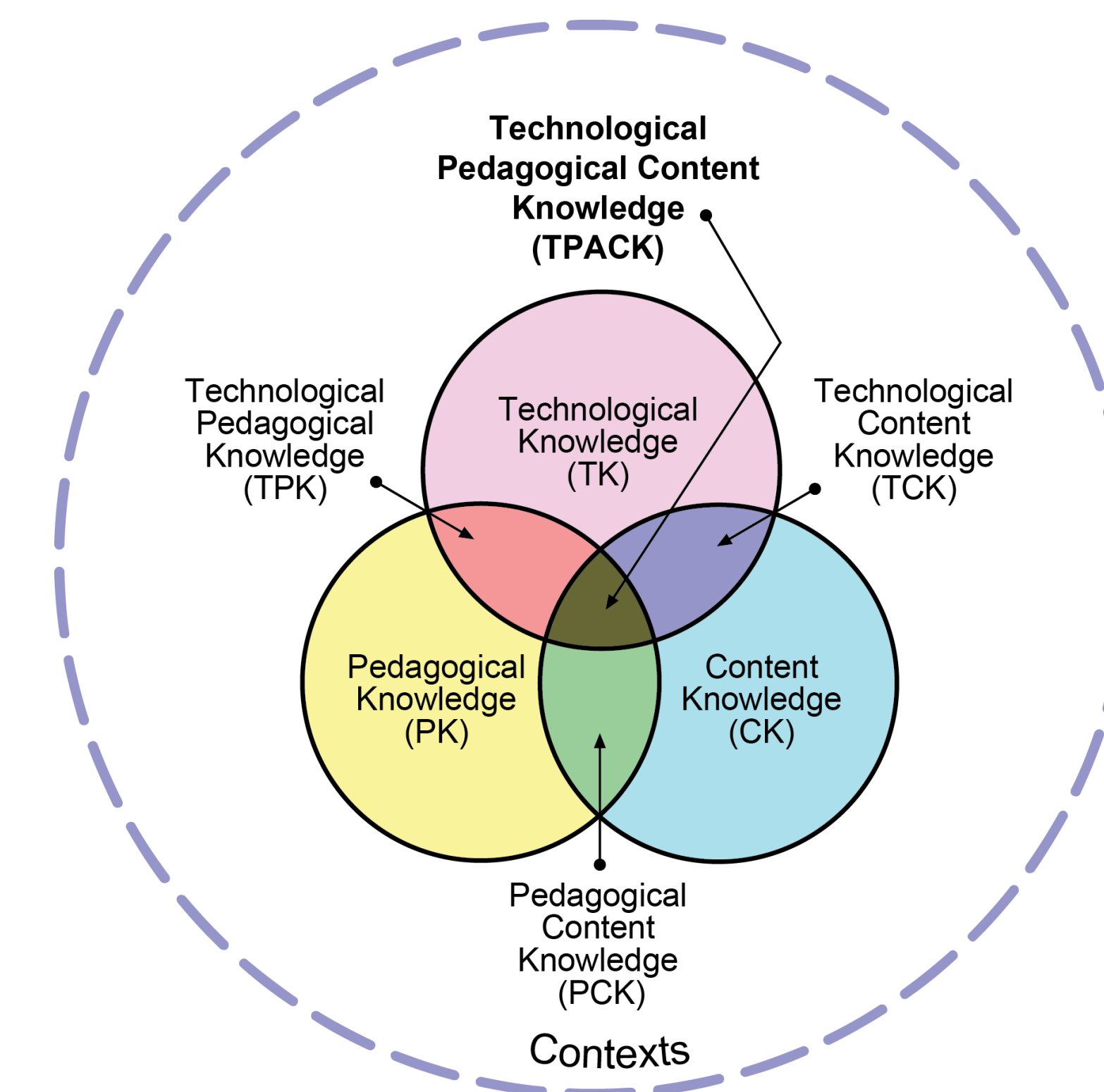


Table 1.

Highest rated importance items by content area

Content Area and Items	All Respondents				Content Instructors Only			
	Min	Max	M	sd	Min	Max	M	sd
Agricultural Business								
Business Management	1	4	3.32	0.73	3	4	3.67	0.48
Agricultural Systems & Technology								
Safety principles & practices	3	4	3.85	0.36	3	4	3.86	0.35
Animal Science								
Livestock health & management	2	4	3.49	0.58	3	4	3.52*	0.50
ENR								
Sustainable agriculture practices	2	4	3.30	0.65	2	4	3.32	0.65
Leadership & Communications								
Public speaking	2	4	3.51	0.61	2	4	3.32	0.65
Plant Science								
Plant growth and development	2	4	3.45	0.61	2	4	3.48	0.58
Horticulture								
Greenhouse scheduling plans	1	4	3.44	0.73	2	4	3.52	0.68

Note. 1 = not at all important, 2 = slightly important, 3 = moderately important, and 4 = very important. * denotes topics with different order between all respondents and content instructors only

