

Agricultural Leadership Publications: Where Can They Be Found?

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### Introduction

The focus area of agricultural leadership in agricultural education departments has been around for decades; however, agricultural leadership is a continually evolving field (Cletzer et al., 2020; Muscato et al., 2021). With roots in youth development organizations, primarily 4-H and FFA, agricultural leadership education has grown to include undergraduate courses, minors, and majors; graduate courses and specializations; and a variety of adult leadership education programs (Cletzer et al., 2020; Muscato et al., 2021; Velez et al., 2014; Weeks & Weeks, 2020). This growth resulted in a number of scholars across the U.S. whose primary research and expertise area is agricultural leadership. However, many agricultural leadership faculty are often scattered across several different professional associations, most of which are not agriculture or leadership specific, and are rarely engaged in a single venue to discuss opportunities for continued advancement in research and teaching.

Recent studies have begun to explore agricultural coursework to characterize the nature of leadership education nationwide. Cletzer et al. (2020) reported an inconsistency in the foundational concepts for agricultural leadership coursework across universities and that most leadership theories commonly presented were from the industrial paradigm (Wielkiewicz & Stelzner, 2010). A look at graduate coursework revealed less than 50% of leadership courses offered in agricultural education departments include the contextual basis of agriculture (Muscato et al., 2021). These studies both revealed a disconnect from the primary purpose of agricultural leadership described by Weeks and Weeks (2020): “to prepare future leaders to tackle societal issues related to food and the agricultural sciences” (p. 37). This focus requires that agricultural leadership educators continue to place value on agriculture as a context and to draw upon the ecological paradigm’s leadership theories for course content (Western, 2019).

While the studies above primarily focused on coursework, they also raised questions of current trends in agricultural leadership research. Connors and Swan (2006) synthesized 15 years of leadership development research in the context of agricultural education as a starting point for understanding the volume of research, focus areas, and authors published in the *Journal of Agricultural Education* (JAE) and at the American Association for Agricultural Education (AAAE) National Conference. However, a national review of agricultural leadership scholarship has never been conducted. This study aims to fill this gap by identifying the number of studies and where research on agricultural leadership has been published each year in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This study supports the National Research Agenda of the AAAE Priority 7: Addressing Complex Problems (Andenoro et al., 2016) by summing agricultural leadership scholarship to advance research and build upon previous findings.

### Conceptual Framework

*Context* is an important aspect that relates to leadership education and emerges through three themes (Sowcik & Komives, 2020). The first theme relates to the manner in which leadership education is *incorporated into the discipline* and how it impacts the learning involved in agricultural leadership. Agricultural leadership programs aim to advance knowledge and skills for a more productive workforce (Sowcik & Komives, 2020). The second theme is related to the *distinct purpose* of leadership programs (Sowcik & Komives, 2020), which in agricultural leadership is focused on preparing future leaders to solve complex issues. The third theme is related to leadership being *defined as a process* rather than a position (Sowcik & Komives,

2020), a notion originating in the ecological paradigm (Western, 2019). Under this conceptual framework, understanding further the context of agriculture in leadership research through the synthesis of research can aid in determining future research priorities (Radhakrishna, 1998).

### Methodology

We investigated the Journal of Agricultural Education (JAE), Journal of Leadership Education (JOLE), Journal of Applied Communications (JAC), Journal of Extension (JOE), and the NACTA Journal from 2000 to present for any titles and abstracts that related to agricultural leadership education, development, and/or research which resulted in 530 articles. Additionally, we conducted an exhaustive search of library databases including ERIC, EBSCO, JSTOR, and Google Scholar for articles including “agriculture or agricultural” and “leader or leadership,” which yielded 19 additional articles. We excluded articles where the primary population was outside of the U.S. We included a total of 549 articles in the study.

### Results

Of the 549 published articles from 2000 to present, 189 were in JAE (34.4%), 136 in JOE (24.8%), 113 in JOLE (20.6%), 55 in the NACTA Journal (10.0%), 37 in JAC (6.7%), and 19 additional articles (3.5%) were from 16 different publications. Table 1 displays the mean number of articles published in each journal in five-year increments, respectively.

Table 1

*Mean Number of Articles Published in Each Journal in 5 Year Increments*

Journal	2000-2004	2005-2009	2010-2014	2015-2019	2020-Pres
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
JAE	3.8 (2.2)	8.6 (2.7)	8.0 (3.5)	11.4 (2.5)	15 (8.5)
JOE	5.0 (3.3)	7.2 (3.6)	8.6 (4.2)	5.4 (1.8)	2.5 (3.5)
JOLE	1.8 (2.5)	8.6 (3.7)	5.2 (3.3)	5.6 (1.5)	3.5 (0.7)
NACTA	2.6 (2.3)	2.8 (1.5)	2.8 (1.1)	2.8 (1.8)	0
JAC	0.4 (0.5)	1.6 (0.9)	2.2 (0.8)	2.8 (2.2)	1.0 (1.4)
Other	0.6 (0.5)	0.8 (0.8)	1.2 (0.8)	0.6 (0.5)	1.5 (0.7)

### Conclusions and Recommendations

JAE had the highest number of agricultural leadership publications followed by JOE. The number of published articles in JAE more than doubled between 2005-2009 with the mean number of articles published per year staying steady and rising over the next 12 years. This trend coincides with the growth of agricultural leadership as an area of research and field of study. Published articles in JOLE increased to an average of 8.6 articles per year between 2005-2009 but dropped to 5.2 and continued at that average in the following years. This could be related to several factors including the importance of agriculture as a context and the number of second-discipline instructors whose primary scholarship is teaching in a leadership classroom. Overall, we conclude that publishing of agricultural-related leadership research is not as fractioned as Cletzer et al. (2020) revealed coursework to be based solely on where agricultural leadership scholars are publishing. However, this data does not examine theoretical trends and methods. We recommend continued national scale research to uncover patterns, trends, and foci of past agricultural leadership research to inform the future direction of scholarship in the discipline.

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