



Insights from the Frontlines: Evaluating Recent Teacher Preparation Graduates' Satisfaction with their Pedagogical Content Knowledge



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Introduction

Over the last several decades, agricultural education's largest issue has been recruiting and retaining highly qualified educators (Lemons et al., 2015). While numerous factors contribute to teacher attrition, one of the primary motivators is a lack of confidence in their content knowledge (McKim et al., 2017). Solomonson et al. (2018) determined that a "Lack of Confidence to Teach the Curriculum" and a "Lack of Confidence in Ability to Teach Students" were two of the top five reasons educators leave the profession (p. 331). This lack of confidence is also evident in approximately 50% of early career educators leaving the profession within their first five years (Moser & McKim, 2020). This lack of confidence often stems from poor pedagogical content knowledge development (McKim et al., 2017). This is particularly concerning for teacher educators because the primary source of pedagogical content knowledge for preservice and early career teachers is the teacher preparation program (Rice & Kitchel, 2015). Unfortunately, many preservice educators are unsatisfied with the quality, quantity, and transferability of the pedagogical content knowledge received from their teacher preparation program (Rice & Kitchel, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

- Human Capital Theory (HCT).
- Becker (1993) suggests that as education, experience, and specialized training increase, an individual's competence in their profession will subsequently increase.
- These four sources of information are closely related to both student and educator standards upheld within agricultural education.
- If teacher preparation programs can improve the quality, quantity, and transferability of the content knowledge presented to preservice educators, it could increase their confidence/competence and reduce attrition.

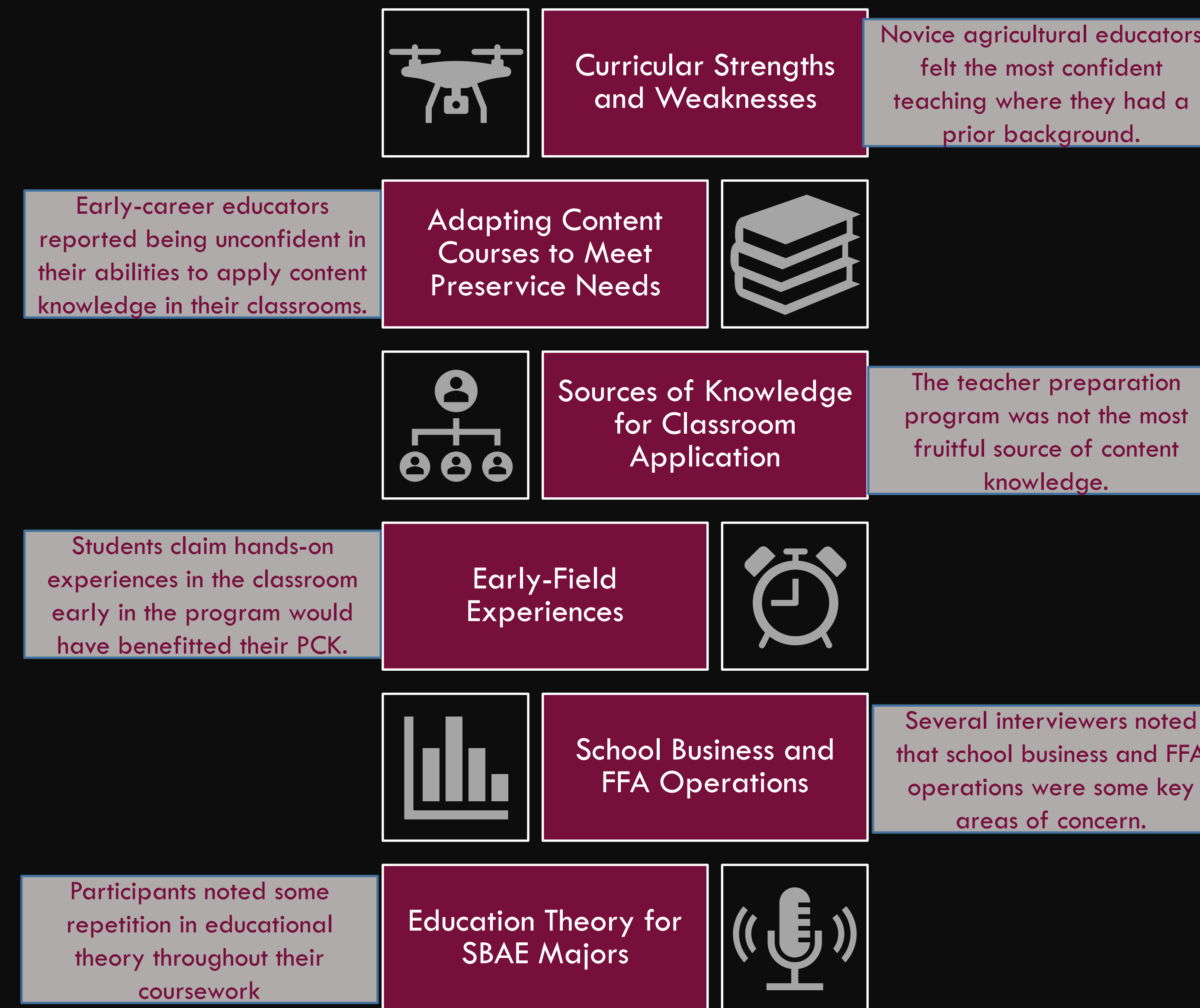
References



Research Objectives

- 1.) Evaluate recent teacher preparation program graduates' satisfaction with the pedagogical content knowledge they received from their training.

Results



Theme	Exemplary Statements
Curricular Strengths and Weaknesses	"I think the most confident was plant science just because that was like what I grew up on, and like I grew up gardening, and like that's what I was taught a lot in my agriculture classes, and so I had a lot of knowledge previously before I went into the classroom"- F3
Adapting Content Courses to Meet Preservice Needs	"I don't feel like I really took very many content courses like I think it was just very general"- F3
Sources of Knowledge for Classroom Application	"I'm not saying to not reference the college standards by any means, but call somebody that's been in the field and they're actually doing stuff and how they apply it into their lessons..."- (M5)
Early-Field Experiences	"We kind of waited late into our degree program to actually start the act of teaching, and I feel like that would have changed people's minds earlier in their degree path to change their major"- (F7)
School Business and FFA Operations	"...I would really like to know how AET works 'cause Lord knows we did not get any AET knowledge whatsoever..."- (M4)
Education Theory for SBAE Majors	"Personally, as an agricultural education major, we had to take a lot of classes through the College of Education, which involved, like multicultural ed, Indian education for all, differentiated learning, things like that... we had to study, like, how would you rewrite a math test for a kid who struggles with reading? Well, I don't teach math."- (M7)

Methods

- Utilized a Qualitative Phenomenological Case Study Design.
- Population was recent agricultural education teacher preparation program graduates.
- Employed ($f = 15$) 30-minute semi-structured interviews (Marriam & Tisdell, 2016).
- Participants were purposively identified using snowball sampling.
- Guided by Naturalistic Inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
- The fifteen interviews provided thick, rich descriptions that met saturation and allowed the researchers to identify themes and subthemes.
- Utilized inductive coding process with open and axial coding followed by theoretical coding to analyze the data once saturation was met (Bryman, 2016).
- To improve trustworthiness, data triangulation occurred by analyzing field notes, a reflexive journal, and interview transcriptions.
- There were eight ($f = 8$) participants from New Mexico, two ($f = 2$) from Montana, one ($f = 1$) from Oklahoma, one ($f = 1$) from Maryland, one ($f = 1$) from Alabama, one ($f = 1$) from Minnesota, and one ($f = 1$) from North Carolina.

Conclusion

- Recent graduates believe they would have benefited from transitional courses that helped them turn their content knowledge into pedagogical content knowledge.
- Some participants (M3, M6, F6, F7) felt that the content they learned in college was adequate, and they expressed concerns about being able to apply and share that knowledge in the classroom.
- Several individuals (M3, M7, F3, F5, F6, F7) cited that they would have greatly benefited from entering the classroom earlier and obtaining more hands-on experiences in their teacher preparation program.
- Multiple interviewees expressed concern about their abilities to adequately operate their school-based agricultural education programs from a business perspective (F1, F4, F8, M3, M4, M5, M7).
- Several (M3, M4, M5, M7) indicated that rather than experiencing ineffective content courses, they felt that some of their educational theory, diversity, and differentiation courses were ineffective or unrelatable to their classroom experiences.

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