

**The Impact of a Weeklong CASE Institute on School-Based Agricultural Education
Teachers' Intention to Remain in the Profession**

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Introduction/Need for the Study

Professional development aims to educate teachers further, as teacher preparation programs cannot be expected to prepare teachers for the rigor of teaching without supplemental professional development (Easterly & Myers, 2019). Professional development is a critical part of educational reform (Desimone, 2009; Gusky, 2000) and the corresponding progression of preparing teachers for the rigorous job ahead. According to Desimone (2009), professional development should be focused on the content teachers are teaching, involve active learning, be coherent with previous professional development offerings, have a significant duration, and involve collective participation between teachers. This criterion has often not been met by the professional development teachers receive (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

Teacher attrition is one of the most plaguing education concerns, especially in school-based agricultural education (SBAE), given the additional demands (Norris et al., 2024). So, the question remains: how do we retain the SBAE teachers we have today and recruit tomorrow's teachers? One potential way is through purposeful professional development; therefore, this study aimed to determine how participation in a CASE animal science institute (ASA) at [University] impacted participants' intentions to remain in the SBAE classroom.

Theoretical Framework

According to the theory of planned behavior, human behavior is guided by three kinds of considerations: beliefs about the experiences associated with behavior, beliefs about the normative expectations and behaviors of significant others, and beliefs about the presence of factors that may facilitate or impede the performance of the behavior (Ajzen, 2019).

Methods

This research employed a non-experimental qualitative research design (Privitera, 2017) aimed to obtain the perceptions of SBAE teachers ($N = 25$) attending a five-day CASE ASA professional development opportunity at Oklahoma State University. Given the small population of interest, a census approach was employed (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). To achieve the objective of this study, Mirror by Swivl will be used for qualitative reflections. Twenty-four of the 25 teachers (96.0%) completed the qualitative reflections. The qualitative data was collected during the last day of the in-person institute using Mirror by Swivl. The Mirror allowed individual reflections following three prompts. Participants were asked about their plans for implementation, barriers they anticipated, and the impact of the experience on their careers. MirrorTalk.ai was used as an embedded data analysis tool within the Mirror device for qualitative analysis. MirrorTalk.ai provided the research team with reflective insights related to the questions asked, focusing on the participant's learning experience, challenges faced, and mindset (Swivel, 2024). In addition to the AI-generated qualitative data analysis, the research team watched the reflection videos and reviewed reflection transcriptions to enhance the

trustworthiness of the qualitative findings through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Privitera, 2017).

Findings

SBAE teachers' reflections commonly stated that networking and collaborating with teachers from various other states was a positive part of their professional development experience. One teacher said, "I enjoyed collaborating with other teachers and regaining and recouping my passion for agricultural education." Another stated, "Coming to these CASE Institutes, you get to network with other agriculture teachers, making you feel a part of something a little bigger than just your department and your school." In their Mirror reflection, 12 teachers reported networking and collaboration with other ag teachers was a positive experience. During their mirror reflection, 19 teachers commented on their intention to stay in the classroom. Twelve stated that this CASE institute impacted their intention to remain in the profession, five stated that it gave them more confidence in their teaching abilities, and two stated that it confirmed that they were in the correct profession. Overarchingly, participants believed CASE ASA would reduce burnout. "CASE has made it where I am not burnt out early in my career and can still have a work-life balance." Many early career teachers echoed the sentiment that CASE ASA would be easy to use, reducing their workload. Work-life balance is a recurring statement among many SBAE teachers. One teacher stated, "With our busy jobs and all the things we have to do sometimes, it is hard to find time to make impactful lessons, but having curriculums like CASE ASA where everything is made up for you, and they are fun, makes my job much easier." The most common challenges teachers stated were the cost of materials and the cost of professional development, getting access to the materials, the pacing of the curriculum, student engagement, and student skill level, which were identified as potential barriers to implementation.

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

The CASE ASA institute at Oklahoma State University positively impacted SBAE teacher's intention to remain in the profession with nearly 80% of participating teachers commenting on their intention to remain in the SBAE classroom at the end of the institute. Participating SBAE teachers often expressed the sentiment that attending made them feel like they are a part of something larger than their school, revitalizing their passion for SBAE. Fostering these networks among teachers can equip them to grow professionally and feel more connected (Desimone, 2009).

Fifty percent of the teachers commented on how CASE ASA reduced their burnout and increased their ability to obtain work-life balance. The CASE ASA Institute is a model for supporting early career teachers, supported by the findings of Easterly and Myers (2019). The institute allowed teachers nationwide to network and collaborate. Due to the positive impact of networking and collaboration, we recommend that professional development opportunities prioritize time for networking and collaborative efforts, ultimately developing a platform where teachers can stay connected after the professional development has concluded. Research needs to further explore the impact of CASE on teacher's intention to retire and how it impacts teacher's burnout and work-life balance using a longitudinal design. The Mirror by Swivl served as a valuable reflection tool and should be considered as a future opportunity for purposeful reflection and evaluation during professional development opportunities and associated research projects.

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