

GEORGIA AGRICULTURE TEACHER ATTRITION

by

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(Under the Direction of John Ricketts)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the primary factors contributing to the retention or attrition of Georgia agriculture teachers. Data was collected during a one month period beginning in January 2010. Teachers responded to a web-based survey which sought to determine the following: the demographics of Georgia agriculture teachers who responded to the survey, teachers' self perceived likelihood of retention, teachers' job satisfaction as it relates to working conditions, and contributing factors to teachers' self-perceived likelihood of retention. Results showed respondents are generally satisfied with their jobs and the majority of teachers plan to remain in the profession. Differences were shown between gender in the area of job satisfaction and self-perceived likelihood of retention. Teachers were found to be most likely to leave the profession because of retirement and family and children commitments. Teachers were also found to be most dissatisfied because of burnout.

INDEX WORDS: Teacher Attrition, Teacher Retention, Teacher Burnout, Teacher Shortage, Agricultural Education, Job Satisfaction, Teacher Working Conditions

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband and best friend, Cliff. He has been my supporter and confidant in every endeavor.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural education programs are necessary to provide qualified individuals to fill jobs in the agricultural industry. In order to sustain these agricultural education programs, qualified teachers are in constant demand (Kantrovich, 2007).

There is a teacher shortage in general education as well as in agricultural education. In education as a whole, data shows from the 1999-2000 school year that 58% of schools reported difficulty in filling at least one teaching position opening (Ingersoll, 2003). In agricultural education, the shortage is severe enough that it has the “potential to reach epidemic proportions if we are unable to recruit additional students into the field of agricultural education and the continued growth in secondary agricultural education programs continues” (Kantrovich, 2007, p. 12). Kantrovich went further to report that in the United States in 2006, there were forty agriculture programs that could not operate because there were not a qualified teachers to fill the positions and there were 78 more vacant agriculture positions available than there were qualified teachers to fill the positions. Often, this teacher shortage forces many school systems to lower standards to fill teaching openings and creates higher levels of under qualified teachers in schools thus lowering school performance (Ingersoll, 2003).

Ingersoll cites the overwhelming demand for teachers as being caused primarily by teacher turnover rather than increases in student enrollment or teacher retirement (2003). Therefore, no teacher supply strategy will work to supply our nation’s classrooms “if we do not reverse the debilitating rate of teacher attrition” (Unraveling the Teacher Shortage, 2002, p.3).

Many of the vacant positions in agricultural education are caused by teacher attrition – those who decide to leave teaching for at least a one year period.

According to Walker, Garton, and Kitchel, many attempts and strategies have been employed to address the teacher shortage, including forgiveness of student loans, special scholarships, tuition reimbursements, emergency and alternative certification programs, and the rehiring of retired teachers (2004). These strategies have not solved the problem of teacher shortages and one must consider whether the shortage is a “problem of recruitment or a problem of retention” (Walker, Garton, & Kitchel, 2004, p. 28). According to Kirby and Grissmer (1993), over seventy percent of new teachers are hired to replace leaving teachers. This means that only thirty percent of teachers are hired to meet the demands of expanding enrollments, new programs, and growth of classes.

The connections between teacher shortages, both in general education and agricultural education, are obviously linked heavily to teacher retention. This study will address the problem of teacher retention among Georgia agriculture teachers by determining what percentage of Georgia agriculture teachers intend to remain in the profession and by determining to what degree a teacher’s job satisfaction affects their decision to stay in the profession.

Statement of the Research Problem

Retention of agriculture teachers is a growing problem in the United States, especially as the number of agriculture programs continues to increase. As cited above, agricultural education programs are experiencing a shortage in the number of qualified agriculture teachers needed to fill positions (Kantrovich, 2007). Not only is agricultural education experiencing a constant teacher shortage, but a high percentage of agriculture teachers are leaving the profession before retirement – especially within the first five years of teaching (Kantrovich, 2007). With the

existence of a teacher shortage, extra emphasis should be placed on the prevention of teacher attrition. Because of teacher attrition, the gap of certified agriculture teachers needed to fill available agriculture positions continues to widen (Kantrovich, 2007). Attrition also creates an added cost for the State of Georgia. According to Afolabi, Nweke, Eads, and Stephens (2007), the cost to replace teachers in Georgia lost to attrition is almost \$400 million annually.

In order to address the teacher shortage in agricultural education, one must look at why teachers are leaving the profession. Research has shown that among general education, the major factors that contribute to attrition include: salary, retirement, family or personal reasons, pursuit of another job, and dissatisfaction with working conditions (Ingersoll, 2003). One could surmise that all of these reasons relate to one's overall satisfaction with the profession. Many studies have been conducted on agriculture teacher job satisfaction by surveying those still in the profession (Thobega & Miller, 2003; Walker, et al., 2004; Castillo, Conklin, & Cano, 1999; Castillo & Cano, 1999; Cano & Miller, 1992), but few studies have inventoried job satisfaction and how it relates to one's intent to remain in the profession. If one can understand the primary causes of attrition and identify the primary contributors to job satisfaction, then the profession can address the problem of teacher attrition through providing proper training, programs, or support for agriculture teachers.

Purpose of the Study

As mentioned above, there is a growing shortage of agriculture teachers in the United States, due in part to a lack of teacher retention (Kantrovich, 2007). Teacher retention is a perpetual problem in education. In the category of vocational and technical education, there was a 13.4 percent turnover in 1994-1995, much of which was caused by teachers leaving the profession altogether (Ingersoll, 2003). The constant problem of attrition in general education

teachers seems to be amplified in agricultural education because of the unique job expectations as compared to regular education teachers. In order to solve this shortage, the need to assess the causes of this attrition is more important than ever. “Understanding the factors associated with teacher turnover and retention is the first critical step in developing teacher retention strategies” (Ruhland, 2001, p. 58). If one can determine the causes of attrition, possible changes can be made in the agricultural education community to meet the needs and desires of agriculture teachers and therefore decrease the rate of attrition.

The purpose of this study was to determine the primary causes of attrition of agriculture teachers in Georgia. The study will also determine the level of job satisfaction among agricultural educators and how certain job satisfaction indicators influence retention.

Objectives

Objectives of this study are the following:

1. Identify demographics of Georgia agriculture teachers.
2. Determine Georgia agriculture teachers’ self-perceived likelihood of retention.
3. Determine level of job satisfaction, as it relates to working conditions, for Georgia agriculture teachers.
4. Determine contributors to attrition (i.e. job satisfaction as it relates to working conditions, demographics, retirement) of those indicating they were likely to leave the profession.

Definition of Terms

Agricultural Education: Middle school and high school programs conducted to teach students in areas of the agriculture industry. Agricultural education programs contain three components: classroom instruction, supervised agricultural experience programs, and FFA/leadership activities (National FFA, 2008).

Voluntary Attrition: Voluntary decision to leave the teaching profession for at least one year.

National FFA Organization – Chartered and still recognized by the United States Department of Agriculture as Future Farmers of America, the FFA is a national youth organization for students enrolled in agricultural education whose mission is to develop students’ “potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education” (National FFA, 2008, p. 5).

Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) Program – A required component of the agricultural education program for students. SAE programs involve hands on experience in an area of agriculture that reflects the student’s career goals and interests (National FFA, 2008). Examples include: working an agriculture related job, beginning an agriculture related business, conducting agriculture research, and home improvement projects that utilize agricultural skills.

Limitations of the Study

Since the study utilizes a random sample of Georgia agriculture teachers, the study does not attempt to generalize results for the nation. Also, the study relies on accurate self-reporting of the surveyed individuals. Therefore, caution must be used in interpreting the results of this study due to the nature of self-reporting.

Basic Assumptions

The following assumptions will be made concerning this study:

- Individuals will willingly and truthfully answer survey questions based on their experiences.
- Individual responses about causes of teacher attrition will not be influenced by concern for their responses being shared with the agricultural education community or school personnel.

Summary

The results of this study provide the agricultural education community with a prediction of the percentage of agriculture teachers who plan to leave the profession in the near future or before retirement. The research project also determines the primary factors contributing to teacher attrition and provides an opportunity to address these causes with preventative changes and programs. Job satisfaction of agriculture teachers will also be measured based on individual criteria. If the agricultural education community targets the causes of teacher attrition and job dissatisfaction, then the shortage of agriculture teachers can be diminished.

Chapter two outlines the theoretical framework for this study and reviews the literature on teacher retention, causes of teacher attrition, and job satisfaction.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter one outlines the purpose of this study, which is to determine what percentage of agriculture teachers plan to remain in the profession and also diagnose what factors contribute to the decision to remain in or leave the profession. Chapter 1 provides the following objectives that frame this study:

1. Identify demographics of Georgia agriculture teachers.
2. Determine Georgia agriculture teachers' self-perceived likelihood of retention.
3. Determine level of job satisfaction, as it relates to working conditions, for Georgia agriculture teachers.
4. Determine contributors to attrition (i.e. job satisfaction as it relates to working conditions, demographics, retirement) of those indicating they were likely to leave the profession.

In chapter 2, a review of literature is presented to shed light on findings and theories related to teacher retention, attrition, job satisfaction, and other related topics. Many studies have been conducted to study attrition, job satisfaction, and teacher shortages and this literature review will summarize the evolving theories of those studies.

Theoretical Framework

The primary theories guiding this study is Grissmer and Kirby's (1987) Human Capital Theory and the research conducted by Richard Ingersoll (2003) on the reasons behind teacher shortages and attrition. According to Grissmer and Kirby (1987), attrition is more likely in early

educators who are in their first few years of teaching as well as in teachers who are towards the end of their career. Attrition is lowest among mid-career teachers. This U-shaped trend in attrition can be attributed to many factors. Teachers early in their career have less invested in the career while teachers late in their career are nearing retirement and many become eligible for early retirement, thus increasing attrition rates (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987). Grissmer and Kirby demonstrate this U-shaped curve and attribute causes of this trend to the Human Capital Theory, which postulates that as individuals remain in a job, they gain certain forms of monetary and non-monetary capital in the workplace (Grissmer, 1987). According to Grissmer, monetary capital would include incentives such as salary, health benefits, promotion opportunities, and retirement pensions while non-monetary capital would include items such as relationship with co-workers, working conditions, hours, family expectations, availability of equipment and materials, and the attitudes and behaviors of students (1987). The longer one remains in one occupation, the more capital the individual acquires.

With the Human Capital Theory, gained capital can be occupation-specific, location-specific, and firm-specific, meaning that the training and incentives relating to teaching as an occupation, the location of one's preferred job, the demands or incentives of the local school system (firm) all contribute to the capital one has in a job. The higher one's invested capital in a job, the more likely that person is to remain in the profession (Grissmer, 1987). This theory shows why attrition is more likely early in the career rather than mid-career because of the greater amounts of capital gained, both monetary and non-monetary, as a teacher logs years in the profession (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993).

Based upon Grissmer's research, the reasons for attrition of general education teachers vary by age group, with younger teachers most likely to leave because of changes in family

status or a move of residence and older teachers most likely to leave late in their career due to early retirement benefits (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993). Studies show that 46 percent of teachers leave the profession within the first five years of teaching (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 14). These astonishingly large numbers can be attributed to several causes and the reasons for attrition also vary when one compares those who permanently leave teaching with those who take a temporary break from the profession. Among those taking a break in teaching, pregnancy and childbearing accounted for 47.3 percent of those involved in an Indiana survey (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993). This is likely a trend in all states as well as within the specific teaching area of agricultural education. The second most likely cause for temporary attrition among those Indiana teachers was the opportunity to try another career. A change in geographic location has also been ranked highly among early career educators (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993). Ingersoll confirms these numbers by stating that turnover relating to family or personal reasons – including pregnancy, child rearing, health problems, and family moves – accounts for 44% of teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 16). Other research guiding the theoretical framework of this study includes research findings relating job satisfaction to attrition.

As stated in Grissmer's Human Capital Theory, attrition is usually directly related to the amount of capital a person holds in their job (1987). Several of the factors that create capital in Grissmer's theory – family commitments, job expectations, and relationship with co-workers – also determine one's overall satisfaction with a job (Ingersoll, 2007). Therefore, if one knows what causes job satisfaction and dissatisfaction in agriculture teachers, programs may be developed to target these areas in agriculture teachers (Cano & Miller, 1992). In order to look at job satisfaction, one must consider what it involves. According to Bruening and Hoover (1991), "How satisfied the secondary agricultural education teachers were with their jobs was best

explained by the fulfillment the teachers received from teaching and the satisfaction they derived from teaching” (p. 42). Many studies have discovered that most agriculture teachers are satisfied with their job when it comes to the working conditions and the satisfying factors of achievement, advancement, recognition, responsibility, and the work itself (Castillo & Cano, 1999). However, job satisfaction relates to more than just working conditions. It also includes family attributes such as marital satisfaction and the conflict between parental and professional responsibilities (Odell, Cochran, Lawrence, & Gartin, 1990). Job satisfaction as it relates to personal and family reasons, especially among women, has been found to be low in previous studies (Foster, 2001).

Based upon the Human Capital Theory and studies involving attrition and job satisfaction, the following conceptual model has been developed to frame this study and future agriculture teacher retention research:

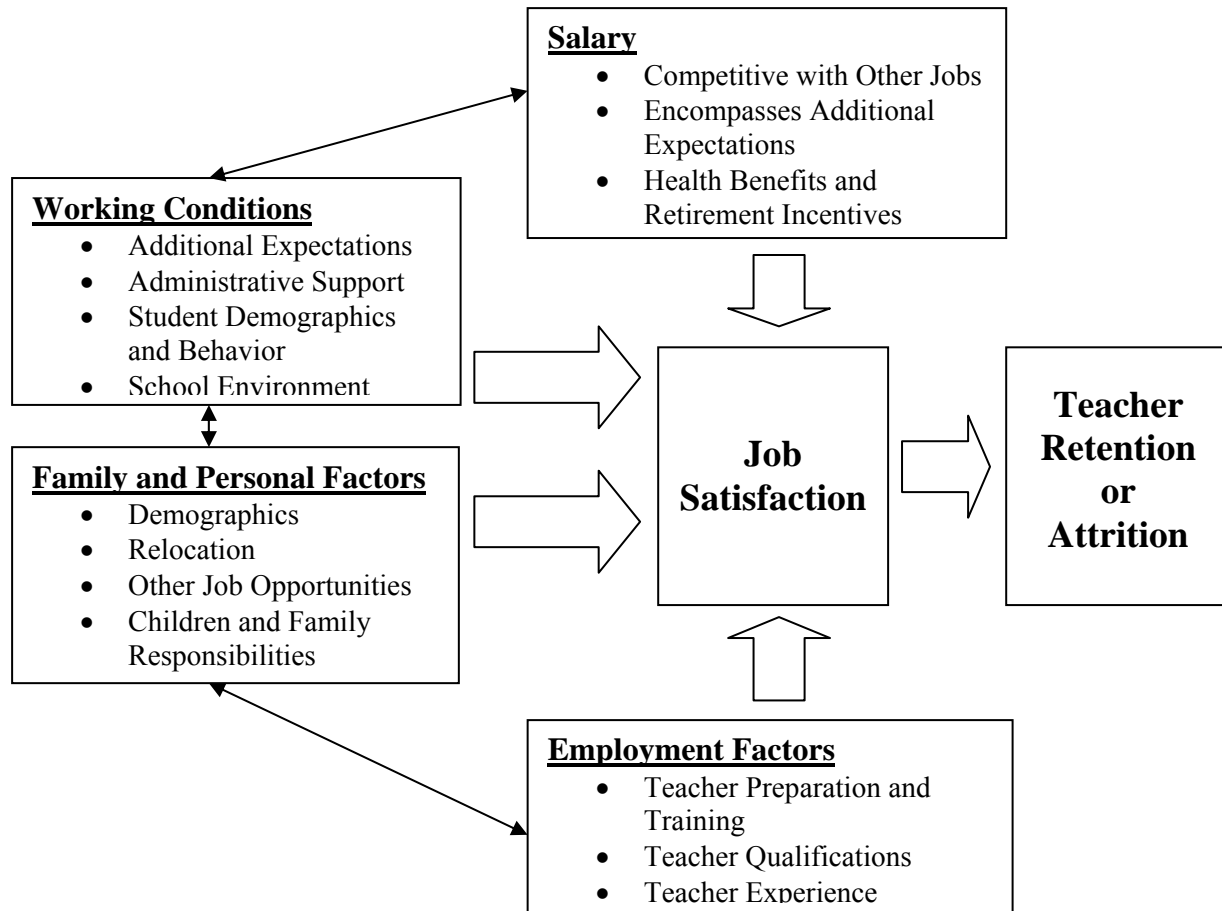


Figure 1. Conceptual model explaining primary causes of teacher attrition in agricultural education.

The conceptual model above details the primary categories that contribute to job satisfaction as a whole and demonstrates how job satisfaction relates to teacher retention or attrition. Each of the major categories in this theoretical model is discussed in detail in this chapter. However, the primary area of focus in this research study will be the area of working conditions.

Working Conditions

Working conditions are the primary category of focus in this research study. The conceptual model outlines working conditions as including administrative support, student demographics and behavior, school environment, and additional job expectations. Many studies

have looked at job satisfaction as it relates to working conditions (Walker, et al., 2004; Bennett, Iverson, Rohs, Langone, & Edwards, 2002; Castillo, Conklin, & Cano, 1999; Cano & Miller, 1992; Watson & Hillison, 1991).

In the study by Walker, et al. (2004), job satisfaction of those who left the profession was compared with those who moved to another school and those who stayed in the profession. They found that all were generally satisfied with their first year teaching experience. They did find that on the open ended response section of their survey, “lack of administrative support” was the most frequently reported reason given by leavers, followed closely by family issues.

Furthermore, age, years in their current teaching position, total years of teaching, degree, and tenure of female and male agriculture teachers were not found to have a significant relationship or impact on overall job satisfaction. The overall data from this study showed that people leaving agricultural education are “leaving for opportunity aspects that they are not receiving through the realms of teaching secondary agriculture” (Walker, et al., 2004, p. 36). Therefore, one might be satisfied with certain aspects of the job itself, but not with the opportunities it provides such as opportunities for advancement.

Bennett et al. researched the level of job satisfaction of Georgia Agriculture teachers in 2002. They found that agriculture teachers in Georgia were generally satisfied with their teaching position. They also found that extended day status and the number of years experience had significant and positive impacts on the level of job satisfaction. Based on the level of job satisfaction, 14.5% were estimated to be at risk of leaving the profession (Bennett, et al., 2002).

Watson and Hillison found in their 1991 study of agriculture teachers in West Virginia that the teachers were most dissatisfied with school policies and practices, advancement

opportunities, and supervisor competency – all of which fall under the category of working conditions.

It has also been found that job satisfaction as it relates to working conditions can vary by gender as males and females rank different items as important contributors of job satisfaction. Females were not satisfied with the supervision they received while males were not satisfied with their working conditions (Cano & Miller, 1992).

From the former research studies conducted, there are many areas that contribute to job satisfaction under the category of working conditions. Items such as school administrative support, facilities provided, and teacher support programs all contribute in some way to teacher satisfaction.

Salary

While salary is indirectly a function of working conditions, it is also important enough to be an area of focus by researchers. The conceptual model addresses salary as including healthcare, competitiveness with other jobs, and compensation for additional activities such as extended day/extended year. These items together create the total salary.

In Ingersoll's study, poor salary was the biggest reason for dissatisfaction of general education teachers (2003). Salary has also been found to have a direct correlation with teacher turnover and teacher attrition as twenty five percent of teachers are leaving the field of teaching because of dissatisfaction and the number one cause for dissatisfaction is poor salary (Ingersoll, 2003).

Salary has been linked to the overall satisfaction of general educators. Kirby and Grissmer (1993) even cite salary as one of the main causes for permanent teacher attrition with over half of the educators stating salary as the single most important factor that would help with

teacher retention. Therefore one would think that raising teacher salaries would compensate for this problem and help curve teacher attrition rates. However, in those surveyed by Kirby and Grissmer (1993), “two out of three stated that even a twenty percent raise would not have made a difference in their decision to leave” (p. 35).

In a 1990 study conducted by Odell, Cochran, Lawrence, and Gartin, agriculture teachers in the northeastern United States were surveyed and lower salaries had a negative impact on job satisfaction. Agriculture teachers in Georgia are compensated for extra hours worked after the school day for events such as supervising FFA activities or helping students with their Supervised Agricultural Experience projects. Extended day and extended year contract status was found to be positively related to job satisfaction (Bennett, et al., 2002). This satisfaction may be attributed to the salary compensation for the extra responsibilities.

Employment Factors

Teacher preparation and training, teacher qualifications, and teacher experience compose the employment factors category of the conceptual model. While this category is not a direct focus of this research study, it can have notable effects on job satisfaction and retention.

Thobega and Miller (2003) conducted a study looking at the relationship of instructional supervision with the job satisfaction of agriculture teachers and their intent to remain in the profession. While they found that teachers with higher levels of education showed higher levels of job satisfaction, they were actually more likely to express an interest in leaving the field of teaching. However, this might be due to promotional opportunities afforded to them by their degrees. Theobega and Miller (2003) did find that teachers who had a favorable collegial environment were more likely to show intent to remain in the profession.

In addition to college preparation and student teaching, induction programs provided by local systems are another way teachers receive training. Teachers who go through teacher induction programs within their school systems are less likely to leave the profession, with only an 18 percent turnover rate in those teachers receiving full mentoring and induction and a forty percent turnover rate in those having no induction or mentoring (Ingersoll, 2003). Key components of a good teacher induction program that would combat attrition would include increasing the teacher's knowledge base, integrating new teachers with the existing faculty, and encouraging communication between teachers and the community (Flynt & Morton, 2009).

Family and Personal Factors

In the conceptual model, family and personal factors include: demographic characteristics, opportunities for relocation, other job opportunities, and children and family responsibilities. This category is one that is largely related to overall satisfaction and is a large cause of attrition among educators. This research study will address this category of the model by determining if personal and family commitments have a direct impact upon attrition.

Family or personal reasons as well as working conditions such as long hours largely contribute to teacher attrition among educators (Ingersoll, 2003). However, among general education, much of this attrition is temporary as it has been found that a quarter of all teachers who temporarily leave the profession will return within five years – because many leave due to pregnancy and child rearing, to pursue higher education, or due to a family relocation (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993).

Family and personal factors put a tremendous strain on teachers, but even more strain on agriculture teachers because of the excessive expectations. This strain relates directly to the overall job satisfaction of educators. Many teachers in agricultural education hold extended day

and/or extended year contracts that supplement the pay of agriculture teachers for National FFA Organization events and SAE supervision activities. Although these activities provide extra income for teachers, they also demand more hours on the job. Because of these extra expectations, many agriculture teachers work 12-hour days and weekends to meet the demands of the profession (Kelsey, 2006). This type of work schedule makes it difficult to fulfill family obligations.

Bruening and Hoover conducted a study looking at personal life factors and how they relate to teacher effectiveness and job satisfaction (1991). Three hundred sixty three teachers were randomly selected from across the United States to be surveyed and it was determined that while teachers were fulfilled with teaching, parenting was the highest ranking negative factor among agriculture teachers (Bruening & Hoover, 1991). It can be assumed that agriculture teachers are affected just as much, if not more, than general education teachers by family expectations such as child rearing and time with family. Personal factors will always be a big contributor to education as a whole, but now is especially a problem among the growing population of female agriculture teachers (Foster, 2001). Even among men, the presence of children at home contribute negatively to the job satisfaction of agriculture teachers (Odell, Chochran, Lawrence, & Gartin, 1990).

Agriculture teachers face a heightened level of stress due to the nature of the job and they experience moderate levels of emotional exhaustion in their work (Croom, 2003). Croom found that many who are “considered becoming qualified to teach, but have decided against teaching because they do not want to take on a career that will lead to burnout and dissatisfaction” (2003, p. 11).

The largest demographic indicator found in former research to contribute to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction is gender. The typical female agriculture teacher in Georgia is 32 years old who is either not married or married with one child, has six years experience, and works on average 43 hours per week on the job and an additional 23 hours per week for personal and family responsibilities (Ricketts, Stone, & Adams, 2006). These statistics show that female agriculture educators in Georgia are relatively young and many are either not married or only have one child. This in itself demonstrates that many women who would like to have more than one child or larger families are not entering or remaining in the profession. One cannot deny that gender likely has some impact on teacher attrition as “today’s working woman is faced with maintaining a traditional family role and developing a new niche for her role as mother and career professional” (Foster, 2001, p. 3). Many women in agricultural education are faced with the challenging tasks of finding time for family and children, choosing not to have a fear of having a family, dealing with guilt over the conflicts in expectations from career and family, and gaining spousal support (Foster, 2001). Some teachers even go so far as to not have any children because of the sacrifices they would have to make in their career. As stated in Ricketts, et al. (2006), “forty-three hours a week is not that excessive, but the additional 23 hours per week for personal and family responsibilities may begin to wear on female agriculture educators” (p. 59). In Foster’s 2001 qualitative study, one woman states that she “would never recommend a woman raising a family to be an ag teacher” (p. 7). Many also involved in Foster’s study of current female agriculture teachers were discouraged and planning to leave the profession. Many women also report that gender bias and lack of support by school administrators and community members were causes for attrition (Kelsey, 2006). However, in the study conducted by Cano and

Miller (1992), female agriculture teachers with tenure were overall more satisfied with their jobs than males.

One could also postulate that job satisfaction varies by gender due to cultural differences in the expectations of males and females in the United States. In a comparison of males versus female teachers in Ohio, the mean scores for females on satisfying factors were lower than that of males, so one has to consider that females are placed under some possible unintended biases from administrators or supervisors (Castillo & Cano, 1999).

From the above findings, one can infer that there are certain gender specific reasons for attrition among agricultural educators and solutions aimed at improving job satisfaction should account for these gender differences. There are many other factors included in the area of family and personal factors such as general family responsibilities and other job opportunities.

Chapter Summary

The framework for this study is Grissmer and Kirby's (1987) Human Capital Theory and Richard Ingersoll's 2003 report on the causes of attrition and teacher shortages. This study will combine those theories with research conducted on job satisfaction among agriculture educators to determine the primary causes of attrition among Georgia agriculture teachers.

Studies have shown the primary causes of attrition among general educators and on the job satisfaction of agriculture educators. The researchers also found in this chapter that many studies have shown a link between gender and job satisfaction as it relates to family and personal factors. Family and personal factors along with working conditions tend to be the most researched and proven factors contributing to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction among agriculture educators.

Rather than research every aspect of the conceptual model presented above, the researcher will focus on gathering the primary reasons why agriculture teachers remain in or leave the profession. The researcher will also study in more depth the areas of job satisfaction as it relates to working conditions and how working conditions relate to attrition.

Chapter 3 provides the research methodology used in this study, including information about the sample population, a description of the research design, an outline of the procedures used, and information on the research instrument.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to determine the primary contributors to teacher retention and job satisfaction among Georgia agriculture teachers. Addressing the problem of agriculture teacher attrition will allow universities and other continuing education programs to tailor their teacher education/induction/professional development programs to meet the challenges associated with the continuing shortage of agriculture teachers.

Chapter one outlines the purpose of this study and provides the following objectives as a framework for research:

1. Identify demographics of Georgia agriculture teachers.
2. Determine Georgia agriculture teachers' self-perceived likelihood of retention.
3. Determine level of job satisfaction, as it relates to working conditions, for Georgia agriculture teachers.
4. Determine contributors to attrition (i.e. job satisfaction as it relates to working conditions, demographics, retirement) of those indicating they were likely to leave the profession.

Chapter two gives an outline of the theory base on the subjects of teacher retention, teacher attrition, and teacher job satisfaction and also provides a conceptual model on which this study is based upon.

In this chapter, the methods used to address the objectives are discussed. This chapter will outline the research design, information about the participants, instrumentation, procedures, and how data analysis will occur in the study.

Research Design

This study is a correlational research study that utilizes a survey instrument to gather information about participants and determine contributing factors to attrition. This design was chosen in order to gather current information on teacher job satisfaction based on current conditions and their current intent to remain in or leave the profession in Georgia. The largest threat to internal validity is accurate self reporting of the surveyed individuals. Because the instrument asks personal questions related to plans for attrition and retention as well as asks their level of job satisfaction, some may be hesitant to report their actual beliefs for fear of a breach of confidentiality.

The independent variables include personal and family factors (including demographics such as age, gender, time in current job, etc.), salary, and working conditions (administrative support, school environment, student demographics and behavior). The dependant variables are job satisfaction and teacher retention or attrition.

Sample

The target population for this study included current agricultural education teachers in Georgia. A simple random sample of the $N = 390$ agricultural education teachers in Georgia was taken from the population frame, Georgia Department of Agricultural Education Teacher Directory found at www.gaaged.org. The sample included $n = 248$ participants, and from that sample 159 usable responses were generated for a total response rate of 64%. With only a 64% response rate, non-response could be viewed as a threat to external validity. To account for this threat, $n = 129$ early respondents were compared to $n = 30$ late respondents for each of the variables of interest from the last two “successive waves” of responses following the last two stimuli for response (Lindner, 2002, p. 59). A t-test was used for these comparisons and only two

variables indicated any differences between early and late respondents. Late responders were less likely to have advanced degrees, $t(156, 51) = 2.75, p < .01$, and they were more likely to be alternatively certified than traditionally certified than early responders, $t(156, 32) = 2.30, p = .02$. However, no significant differences were found for the primary variables of interest such as Job Satisfaction or retention, and therefore the sample can be assumed to be representative of the population.

Procedures

A survey was created using a replication of the previous job satisfaction survey by Bennett, et al., (2002) and by adding additional questions to determine how likely current teachers are to leave the profession within certain time periods. See Appendix A for a copy of the instrument used in this study. Participants who said they were likely to leave the profession were also asked what factor would most likely contribute to their attrition. The survey took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Participants were told that their responses would be kept confidential as to not affect the employer/employee relationship.

Participants were contacted via e-mail in January of 2010 to complete the survey using the web host, SurveyMonkey™. Follow up contact was then made at the Georgia Mid-Winter Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association Conference in mid-January and through follow up e-mails on 1/21/2020 and phone contacts on 2/1/2010.

Instrument

The instrument contained several sections. The first section of the instrument had participants fill out demographic information about them. The second section of the instrument asked participants to tell how likely they were to leave the profession during certain time periods (in the next five years, in the next five to ten years, after 25 years of service for early retirement,

and temporarily leave for a period of time and then return). The third section of the instrument which asked the primary cause of attrition was only answered by those who responded they were somewhat likely or very likely to leave.

The last section of the instrument was a replication of the study conducted by Bennett, et al., 2002. This section contained thirty job satisfaction indicators that determine the teachers' job satisfaction as it relates to working conditions. The Cronbach's alpha (reliability) for the survey instrument was .95 in the 2002 study performed by Bennett, et al. Cronbach's alpha of the job satisfaction scale in this study was .93 with 35 job satisfaction items.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics via SPSS version 17.0. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were all used to summarize the demographic data. Likewise, means and standard deviations were used to report likelihood of retention, and t-tests were employed to determine gender differences for likelihood of retention. T-tests were also used to determine differences between genders for job satisfaction. A sum score was calculated for job satisfaction and a summated mean was calculated as well for ease of interpretation. In addition, responses to each item were categorized as disagree, undecided, or agree and reported as such. Backward elimination regression and frequencies were calculated to explain attrition/retention. Effect sizes (Cohen's d for t-tests; R^2 for multiple regression) were also calculated for each of inferential analyses conducted.

Chapter Summary

Chapter three provides the research methodology for this study, including the outline the research design, information about the participants, instrumentation, procedures, and information on data analysis.

Chapter four will present the findings of this study for each research objective.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, the findings of the research are presented based upon the objectives of this study: a) identify demographics of Georgia agriculture teachers; b) determine Georgia agriculture teachers' self-perceived likelihood of retention; c) determine level of job satisfaction, as it relates to working conditions, for Georgia agriculture teachers; and d) determine contributors to attrition (i.e. job satisfaction as it relates to working conditions, demographics, retirement) of those indicating they were likely to leave the profession. The data collected from the 159 participants is analyzed in this chapter and divided into categories based upon the objectives.

Objective 1: Identify Demographics of Georgia Agriculture Teachers

Of those Georgia agriculture teachers surveyed, 98 (61.6%) were male and 61 (38.4%) were female as shown in Table 4-1. Table 4-2 shows that 154 respondents (96.9 %) were white, 4 (2.5%) were black, and 1 (.6%) was Asian American.

Table 4-1
Participants' Gender

Variable	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Male	98	61.6
Female	61	38.4
Total	159	100.0

Table 4-2
Participants' Ethnicity

Variable	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
White	154	96.9
Black	4	2.5
Asian American	1	0.6
Total	159	100.0

The majority of the participants ($n= 132$, 83%) have traditional certification while 18 (11.3%) have alternative certification that is complete and 8 (5%) are working towards alternative certification (Table 4-3).

Table 4-3
Participants' Level of Certification

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Traditional	132	83.0
Alternative (complete)	18	11.3
Alternative (in-process)	8	5.0
Missing	1	.6
Total	159	100

Respondents were primarily high school teachers ($n=113$) at 71.1%. Middle school teachers composed 20.8% ($n=33$), young farmer teachers composed 6.9% ($n=11$), and 1.3% ($n=2$) of teachers teach both middle and high school (Table 4-4). Young farmer teachers are classroom teachers and also work part of their day in the community coordinating educational programs and opportunities for local young farmers.

Table 4-4
Participants' Type of Teaching Position

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
High School	113	71.1
Middle School	33	20.8
Young Farmer	11	6.9
Both	2	1.3
Total	159	100.0

As shown in Table 4-5, 58.5% ($n=93$) of participants possessed a 12 month contract, 32.7% ($n=52$) possessed an 11 month contract, 1 respondent had no contract, 5.7% ($n=9$) of teachers had a 10 month contract, 2 teachers had 11.5 month contracts, and 2 teachers had 10 month (half time) contracts.

Table 4-5
Participants' Length of Contract

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
No Contract	1	.6
12 Month	93	58.5
11 Month	52	32.7
10 Month	9	5.7
11.5 Month	2	1.3
10 Month (1/2 time)	2	1.3
Total	159	100.0

Table 4-6 portrays that 37.7% ($n=60$) teachers had masters degrees, 32.1% ($n=51$) had bachelor's degrees, 25.2% ($n=40$) had specialist degrees, and 4.4% ($n=7$) had doctorate degrees.

Table 4-6
Participants' Highest Degree Earned

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Bachelors	51	32.1
Masters	60	37.7
Specialist	40	25.2
Doctorate	7	4.4
Missing	1	.6
Total	159	100.0

It was found that the majority of the agriculture teachers were on 1 hour per day of extended day status ($n=146$, 91.8%). 5.7% of respondents ($n=9$) reported having no extended day, and 2.5% ($n=4$) reported having 49% pay (Table 4-7).

Table 4-7
Participants' Extended Day Status

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
None	9	5.7
1 hour per day	146	91.8
49%	4	2.5
Total	159	100.0

The mean and standard deviation for common demographic descriptive are found in Table 4-8. The agriculture teachers reported an average age of $M = 37.4$, $SD = 11.8$. The total years participants had been teaching agriculture was an average of $M = 11.5$, $SD = 9.5$. Teachers taught an average of $M = 4.1$, $SD = 1.6$ classes per day and there was an average of $M = 1.8$, $SD = 1.0$ agriculture teachers at their current school. The participants were in their current position on average $M = 7.9$, $SD = 7.9$ years and most agriculture teachers taught a range of 85-140 students. An average of $M = 4.3$, $SD = 5.8$ teachers worked in another agriculture occupation prior to teaching (Table 4-8).

Table 4-8
Participants' Demographic Descriptives

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	37.4	11.8
Total Years Teaching Ag	11.5	9.5
Classes Taught Per Day	4.1	1.6
Number of Ag Teachers at School	1.8	1.0
Years in Current Position	7.9	7.9
Years Working in Ag Prior	4.3	5.8

Objective 2: Determine Georgia Agriculture Teachers' Self-perceived Likelihood of Retention

Using a five point summative rating scale with 1=*Very Unlikely*, 2 = *Somewhat Unlikely*, 3 = *Undecided*, 4 = *Somewhat Likely*, 4 = *Very Likely*, teachers were generally unlikely to leave the profession in the next five years ($M = 1.26$, $SD = 1.49$), in the next 5-10 years ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.51$), or after 25 years for early retirement ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 1.44$). Teachers reported being very unlikely to leave for a period of time and then return to teaching ($M = 1.64$, $SD = 1.10$) (Table 4-9).

Table 4-9
Participants' Self-Perceived Likelihood of Retention

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Teachers who are likely to leave in the next 5 years.	2.26	1.49
Teachers who are likely to leave 5-10 years from now.	2.46	1.51
Teachers who are likely to leave after 25 years of service for early retirement.	2.75	1.44
Teachers who are likely to leave for a period of time and then return.	1.64	1.10

Note. 1=Very Unlikely, 2 = Somewhat Unlikely, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Somewhat Likely, 4 = Very Likely

As shown in Table 4-10, females ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 1.36$) were more likely than males ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.44$) to leave after 25 years of service for early retirement incentives. Females ($M = 1.96$, $SD = 1.25$) were also more likely than males ($M = 1.43$, $SD = .95$) to leave for a period of time and then return to the profession. Temporary attrition is usually higher in females because of pregnancy and child rearing (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987).

Table 4-10
Self-Perceived Likelihood of Retention by Gender

Variable	gender	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
Teachers who are likely to leave in the next 5 years.	male	97	2.27	1.58	.21	155	.84	.04
	female	60	2.22	1.34				
Teachers who are likely to leave 5-10 years from now.	male	91	2.44	1.57	-.20	146	.84	.03
	female	57	2.49	1.41				
Teachers who are likely to leave after 25 years of service for early retirement.	male	92	2.50	1.44	-2.77	148	.01	.48
	female	58	3.16	1.36				
Teachers who are likely to leave for a period of time and then return.	male	90	1.43	.95	-2.92	145	.00	.55
	female	57	1.96	1.25				

Note. 1=Very Unlikely, 2 = Somewhat Unlikely, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Somewhat Likely, 4 = Very Likely

Objective 3: Determine Level of Job Satisfaction, as it Relates to Working Conditions, for
Georgia Agriculture Teachers

Table 4-11 shows the overall Job Satisfaction Sum and Mean for all participants. The average sum for all indicators was $M = 132.32$, $SD = 20.51$. The average mean for all indicators was $M = 3.78$, $SD = .59$.

Table 4-11
Job Satisfaction as it Relates to Working Conditions Sum and Mean

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
Job Satisfaction Sum	72.00	175.00	132.22	20.51
Job Satisfaction Mean	2.06	5.00	3.78	.59

Note. 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Somewhat Disagree*, 3 = *Undecided*, 4 = *Somewhat Agree*, 5 = *Strongly Agree*.

Table 4-12 shows the total responses for each indicator. The statements that most agriculture teachers disagreed with include: “I seldom feel a sense of burnout” ($n = 83$), “appropriate students are placed in my classes” ($n = 59$), and “even if I come into enough money that I can live comfortably without working, I will remain in this profession” ($n = 59$). Teachers most agreed with the statement: “I am an effective teacher (able to get students to learn as desired)” ($n=146$), followed by: “Students are interested in what I teach” ($n=136$) and “I am provided adequate administrative support and backing” ($n=131$). Bennett et al. (2002) found similar results with “I seldom feel a sense of burnout” being the statement most disagreed with statement.

Table 4-12

Job Satisfaction as it Relates to Working Conditions by Item

<i>Job Satisfaction Indicator</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Agree</i>
	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>
I am an effective teacher (able to get students to learn as desired).	3	8	146
My long-range goal is to continue teaching this program.	14	28	115
I rarely feel that most other educators are more satisfied with their jobs.	17	31	109
I rarely feel vulnerable to criticism in my teaching.	28	24	105
I seldom feel isolated.	31	17	109
I feel appreciated by parents for my work with students.	19	10	128
Students are interested in what I teach.	8	13	136
I feel appreciated by my colleagues for my work.	16	21	119
I am provided adequate administrative support and backing.	18	8	131
I feel appreciated by students for my work.	17	23	117
The school's facilities are adequate.	24	12	120
My school has adequate supplies for my program.	23	14	120
The administrators in my school are strong educational leaders.	22	17	116
I feel encouragement from my administrators for my initiatives.	25	17	114
The salary of this job is adequate.	23	19	115

<i>Job Satisfaction Indicator</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Agree</i>
Society has realistic expectations of me.	34	35	87
The amount of preparation time required for this program is adequate.	55	17	85
What is expected of me is realistic.	30	28	99
I feel appreciated by my administrators for my work.	28	9	119
The hours of this job are satisfactory.	46	19	91
The materials at my disposal are adequate for the needs of my program.	30	17	110
The equipment at my school is adequate.	32	11	112
I seldom think of changing jobs.	45	18	93
The student to teacher ratio in my classes is appropriate.	20	10	127
The students in my program are well behaved.	25	13	119
Teachers have appropriate professional status within society.	36	23	98
Even if I come into enough money so that I can live comfortably without working, I will remain in this position.	59	26	72
Adequate promotional opportunities in education exist.	40	37	79
I seldom feel a sense of burnout.	83	25	49
Appropriate students are placed in my classes.	59	35	63

Note. “Disagree” includes all who responded *Mostly Disagree* and *Somewhat Disagree*, “Agree” includes all who responded *Mostly Agree* and *Somewhat Agree*.

Table 4-13 shows the differences in Job Satisfaction Sums and Means by Gender. Males ($M = 134.41$, $SD = 19.91$) are more satisfied than females ($M = 128.67$, $SD = 21.14$). The p value of .09 shows a 90 percent confidence level.

Table 4-13
Job Satisfaction Sum by Gender

	<i>gender</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
Job Satisfaction Sum	male	97	134.41	19.91	1.72	155	.09	.28
	female	60	128.67	21.14				
Job Satisfaction Mean	male	97	3.84	.57	1.72	155	.09	.28
	female	60	3.68	.60				

Objective 4: Determine Contributors to Attrition (i.e. Job Satisfaction as it Relates to Working Conditions, Demographics, Retirement) of those Indicating they were Likely to Leave the Profession

Years taught, job satisfaction sum, and classes taught per day yielded the model best explaining contributing factors to attrition. Regression analysis revealed that the model significantly explained attrition, $F(3, 137) = 14.52, p < .05$. R^2 for the model was .24 and adjusted R^2 was .23. Table 4-15 displays the unstandardized regression coefficients (B), intercept, and standard regression coefficients (β) for each variable. Years taught, job satisfaction sum, and classes taught per day contributed 24 percent in shared variability as causes of teacher attrition (Table 4-14). Teachers with more years of experience are more likely to leave the profession, likely due to retirement. Teachers with more job satisfaction were less likely to leave the profession and the more classes a teacher teaches per day, the less likely the teacher is to leave the profession.

Table 4-14
Backward Elimination Regression Explaining Contributors to Attrition

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Years Taught	.02	.00	.40	5.04	.00
Job Satisfaction Sum	-.01	.00	-.25	-3.29	.00
Classes Taught Per Day	-.05	.02	-.16	-2.11	.04

Note. $R^2 = .24$; Adjusted $R^2 = .23$.

Of those stating they were likely or very likely to leave the profession, 23.4 percent ($f = 22$) plan to retire, 18.1 percent ($f = 17$) would likely leave due to children and family

commitments, 17 percent ($f = 16$) would likely leave due to early retirement, and 9.6 percent ($f = 9$) would likely leave due to student demographics and behavior (Table 4-15).

Table 4-15
Causes of Attrition Among Those Likely to Leave Soon

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Normal Retirement	22	23.4
Children and Family Commitments	17	18.1
Early Retirement	16	17.0
Student Demographics and Behavior	9	9.6
Other Job Opportunities	8	8.5
School Environment	6	6.4
Extended Day/Extended Year	5	5.3
Standards and Expectations		
Administrative Support	5	5.3
Relocation	2	2.1
More Education	2	2.1
Salary	1	1.1
Multiple Reasons/Combination	1	1.1
Total	94	100.0

Chapter Summary

Chapter four described the demographics of the sample population, the self-perceived likelihood of retention, teachers' level of job satisfaction as it relates to working conditions, and contributors to retention or attrition. Chapter five will provide a conclusion for the study and provide suggestions for future research in the retention of agriculture teachers.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The objectives of this study are the following:

1. Identify demographics of Georgia agriculture teachers.
2. Determine Georgia agriculture teachers' self-perceived likelihood of retention.
3. Determine level of job satisfaction, as it relates to working conditions, for Georgia agriculture teachers.
4. Determine contributors to attrition (i.e. job satisfaction as it relates to working conditions, demographics, retirement) of those indicating they were likely to leave the profession.

Chapter one explained the need for a study on the retention of agriculture teachers. Chapter two provides the theoretical basis, literature review on teacher retention and presents a conceptual model to frame this study. The research methodology and design of the study are presented in chapter three and chapter four presents the research findings based upon the study objectives. In this chapter, conclusions as well as suggestions for future research in the area of teacher retention will be presented.

The purpose of this study was to determine the causes of attrition of agriculture teachers in Georgia. The study also aimed at determining the level of job satisfaction among agricultural educators and how certain job satisfaction indicators influence retention. Data was collected through e-mail contact via an internet survey host. Follow up was then conducted in person, via follow up e-mails, and through phone contact. All results were collected during a one month period beginning in January, 2010.

Objective 1: Identify Demographics of Georgia Agriculture Teachers

The purpose of this objective was to identify the demographics of Georgia agriculture teachers. The simple random sample consisted of 159 agriculture teachers, 98 males and 61 females. Having a male majority of agriculture teachers is traditionally expected as noted in other studies (Foster, 2001; Camp, Broyles, & Skelton, 2002). However, because of the consistent imbalance among males and females who teach agriculture, gender was an important demographic to consider when attempting to predict retention.

Out of the participants, 96.9 percent were white while 2.5 percent were black less than one percent (1 respondent) was Asian American. These findings represent a need for more diversity in agricultural education. The number of ethnic minorities participating in this study was so low that ethnicity could barely be expected to be part of any predictive model for teacher retention. Even so, this random sample represented the actual picture of agriculture teacher's ethnic make-up in Georgia, future studies should stratify the sample to include more minorities, thus providing a dataset with more optimal conditions for determining if ethnicity plays a part in agriculture teacher attrition/retention.

Most of the participants (83%) received their teaching certificate the traditional way (undergraduate degree and teaching certificate earned via a major in Agricultural Education, while 16.3 percent earned or is earning an alternative teaching certificate that is either complete or in process. Therefore, a majority of agricultural teachers go through a traditional agricultural education preparation program in a college or university. Those with alternative teaching certificates likely worked in the agricultural industry before entering the teaching profession. These findings support the work of Herbert (2004) in a Texas. She conducted a ten-year longitudinal study comparing cohorts of traditionally and alternatively prepared teachers. She

found that traditionally prepared new teachers were no more or less likely to leave teaching early and vice versa. Given the many differences between agriculture teachers and other subject matter teachers, perhaps a longitudinal study of new agricultural educators who were prepared alternatively and traditionally should be conducted to confirm or refute the growing argument against certification route as a predictor of agriculture teacher attrition or retention.

Respondents were primarily high school teachers (71.1%) whereas middle school teachers composed 20.8 percent of the population and 6.9 percent of the population were young farmer teachers. Two teachers (1.3%) reported teaching both middle and high school agriculture programs. This breakdown of teaching position reflects a representative sample of the overall number of middle and high school programs in the state. It could be argued that high school teachers have more Career Development Events, activities, and responsibilities overall and thus a greater level of stress, but even if this is the case being either a middle school or high school teacher had no bearing on retention or attrition. Being a young farmer teacher also had no impact on leaving the teaching profession early, but the low number of young farmer teachers surveyed causes this researcher to recommend a closer look at retention and attrition among this group.

Over half of the teachers (58.5%) hold a twelve month teaching contract while 32.7 percent of teachers have an eleven month contract and 5.7 percent have a ten month contract. Few agriculture teachers in the state do not have an extended year contract (eleven or twelve month) as teachers are expected to conduct FFA activities and supervise SAE programs outside of the normal school calendar. A majority of the teachers (91.8%) also maintained an extended day status of working an extra hour a day beyond the normal school day. Only 5.7 percent reported having no extended day and 2.5 percent reported being on a 49% pay contract. The 5.7

percent who do not have extended day are likely the same 5.7 percent that only have a ten month contract as these teachers likely do not maintain a total program with FFA and SAE activities. As with certification route and level of secondary education taught, extended year and extended day status (both an indication of the extra responsibilities of an agriculture teacher) had no significant relationship with retention or attrition. Perhaps the myth of agriculture teachers who are so overworked that they quit and go to another career is blown out of proportion.

In terms of education, only 32.2 percent reported a bachelors degree as their highest degree. A majority of teachers go on to receive a higher degree with 37.7 percent holding a masters degree, 25.2 percent holding a specialist degree, and 4.4 percent holding a doctorate degree. Advanced degrees also offer no additional hope of helping to retain agriculture teachers in the field. However, many teachers are pursuing advanced degree options. A majority of teachers seek higher education because of pay incentives offered by the Georgia state salary schedule for teachers. Regardless of their reason, perhaps graduate school is an excellent place for agriculture teachers to develop skills and learn to cope in areas that actually impact retention and/or attrition.

The average age of responding teachers was 37.4 years while the average number of years teaching agriculture was 11.5 years. Teachers also reported working an average of 4.3 years in the agriculture industry before entering the teaching profession. With most teachers retiring with 30 years of service, 11.5 is a relatively low average for teaching years. This is most likely due to younger teachers entering the profession and due to those who work in the industry prior to teaching. Teachers reported being in their current profession an average of 7.9 years, which also seems relatively low. Teachers report teaching an average of 4.1 classes per day with total students taught averaging between 85 and 140 students. Agriculture background and years

in current position did not remain in the model best predicting retention/attrition, but the number of years taught and the number of classes taught per day did enter the model.

These demographics reflect the work load of agriculture teachers across the state. The average agriculture teacher is working on an extended day and extended year contract with 11.5 years teaching experience, higher education (Masters degree and above), and has been in their current teaching position on average 7.9 years. These demographics themselves confirm the issue of attrition as teachers have only been in their position for a relatively short period of time and the total years of teaching agriculture is a relatively low 11.5 years. This low teaching average is due in part to teachers leaving the profession before attaining their thirty years of service (Kantrovich, 2007). The low average for age and years teaching may also be due to the growing number of agriculture programs in the state. More new and young teachers may be necessary to fill newly opening positions and thus may cause these numbers to be lower.

Objective 2: Determine Georgia Agriculture Teachers' Self-perceived Likelihood of Retention

Objective two sought to determine how likely teachers are to leave the profession in the future based upon their current self-perceived likelihood of retention. Teachers responded to four statements on a five point summative rating scale on how likely they were to leave during the following time frames: a) in the next five years; b) five to ten years from now; c) after 25 years of service for early retirement incentives; and d) for a period of time and then return to the profession.

The findings showed that in general, teachers were unlikely to leave the profession and even fewer teachers planning to leave for a period of time and then return. The results did vary by gender with females more likely than males to leave after 25 years of service for early retirement incentives and to leave for a period of time and then return. Both of these differences

were significant thus supporting Ingersoll (2003). According to Ingersoll, female teachers are more likely than males to leave for a period of time and then return as they leave for child rearing and family responsibilities (2003).

Nationally, it has been reported that many agriculture teachers will leave the profession before they attain thirty years of service for normal retirement (Kantrovich, 2007). The good news for Georgia is that teachers were at worst undecided about their remaining in the profession, but most were either somewhat unlikely or unlikely to leave early. Future research should incorporate a longitudinal study and qualitative interviews to determine why Georgia agriculture teachers seem more optimistic about their remaining in the career of agricultural education.

Objective 3: Determine Level of Job Satisfaction, as it Relates to Working Conditions,
for Georgia Agriculture Teachers

A portion of the survey instrument was a replication from the 2002 study by Bennett et al. which reported on the job satisfaction of agriculture teachers in Georgia and selected variables indicating their risk of leaving the teaching profession. This instrument measures teachers' job satisfaction as it relates to working conditions. Teachers responded to job satisfaction indicators using a five point summative rating scale with one being strongly disagree, three being undecided, and five being strongly agree. The results of this section of the study showed agriculture teachers in Georgia as being generally satisfied with their job as it relates to working conditions with an average response on all indicators of 3.78. The job satisfaction indicator that teachers least agreed with was "I seldom feel a sense of burnout." Eighty three teachers of the 159 surveyed disagreed with this statement. Therefore it can be concluded that teachers are generally satisfied with the working conditions of their job and items such as

classroom management, administrative support, and interaction with students. However, Georgia agriculture teachers are burned out. This may be due in part to the extra expectations and the extra hours they must commit to the job which contributes to emotional exhaustion (Croom, 2003).

It was also found that males are slightly more satisfied with their working conditions than females. The mean for males on all of the indicators was 3.84 while the mean for females on all the indicators was 3.68. Based upon previous research, this could be due to unintended biases placed on females by administrators (Castillo & Cano, 1999), or because females rank different items as important in the area of job satisfaction than males (Cano & Miller, 1992).

Further research in this area should focus on the differences between males and females in order to more specifically identify what causes the differences between gender in job satisfaction as it relates to working conditions. While burnout was not a construct, it did surface in the literature and it is notable that it was an item of disagreement among teachers in terms of job satisfaction. Future research also needs to focus on what is causing the burnout of agriculture teachers in order to determine ways to prevent teacher burnout and thus better retain teachers in the profession.

Objective 4: Determine Contributors to Attrition (i.e. Job Satisfaction as it Relates to Working Conditions, Demographics, Retirement) of those Indicating they were Likely to Leave the Profession

Teachers were surveyed to determine the reason that is most likely to contribute to attrition. It was found that “normal retirement” (after thirty years of service) at 24.3 percent was the most likely cause of attrition, followed by “children and family commitments” at 18.1 percent, “early retirement” at 17 percent, and “student demographics and behavior” at 9.6

percent. These results show that other than retirement, children and family commitments are the primary cause for the retention of agriculture teachers in Georgia. This statistic is to be expected because agriculture teachers face extra responsibilities and work longer hours and more days with their extended day and extended year contracts than regular education teachers, leaving little time for family and children commitments.

A backward elimination regression was used to determine the factors in the study that contribute to attrition. It was found that years taught, job satisfaction sum, and classes taught per day revealed the best model explaining the contributing factors to attrition. The number of years taught was positively correlated with attrition as the more years a teacher is in the profession, the more likely they are to leave the profession. This is due to the fact that many of the teachers plan to leave the profession in the next ten years for retirement. However, this statistic does not account for the primary reason teachers leave before retirement. Future research should focus on the reasons why teachers are leaving the profession before thirty years of service. Just as many older teachers are retiring, many young teachers are leaving in their first five years of teaching (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987). Job satisfaction as it relates to working conditions as a part of the regression model confirms previous research linking job satisfaction to retention (Bennett, et al., 2002). The more satisfied one is with the working conditions of their job, the more likely teachers are to remain in the profession.

The number of classes taught per day was the most surprising indicator. The more classes taught per day, the less likely teachers are to leave the profession. This is surprising because more classes many times means more preparation time for teachers. However, middle school teachers usually have more classes per day than high school teachers and therefore this statistic may account for middle school teachers being more satisfied with their jobs.

Future research should be done to determine the exact reasons why the number of classes taught per day affects attrition. A qualitative analysis or a more detailed quantitative descriptive research study is needed to determine how and why the number of classes taught per day contributes to job satisfaction and attrition. Further research should continue to look at the area of job satisfaction as it relates to attrition. This information could be imperative to retaining qualified agriculture teachers and preventing continuing shortages in the profession.

Suggestions for Practice and Future Research

The following recommendations are provided in an effort to strengthen agricultural education programs by reducing the incidences of early attrition:

- Given the differences in males versus females and their plans to remain in the profession, additional data analysis should be conducted to determine why there is a difference in attrition rates between genders.
- Future research should also incorporate a longitudinal study and qualitative interviews to determine why Georgia agriculture teachers seem more optimistic about their remaining in the career of agricultural education.
- Teacher burnout surfaced as an item of disagreement in the area of job satisfaction. More research needs to be done in the area of teacher burnout to determine the causes of burnout. This knowledge would help to increase job satisfaction and thus continue to lower teacher attrition. While teachers in this study generally plan to remain in the profession, if burnout continues among these educators, the decision to remain in the profession could change.

- While both males and females were generally satisfied with their jobs, there was a slight difference in job satisfaction between genders. More research needs to be conducted to determine why these differences in job satisfaction between genders occur.
- A qualitative analysis or a more detailed quantitative descriptive research study is needed to determine how and why the number of classes taught per day contributes to job satisfaction and attrition.
- Further research should continue to look at the area of job satisfaction as it relates to attrition as this information could be imperative to retaining qualified agriculture teachers and preventing continuing shortages in the profession.

Summary

Agriculture teachers are in constant shortage and agriculture teachers are not only leaving the profession before they reach retirement age, but many students are trained at college universities and never enter the profession (Camp et. al., 2002). Fortunately, Georgia agriculture teachers appear to be satisfied with their jobs and generally unlikely to leave the profession. However, future research should be conducted in the areas of job satisfaction, attrition, and teacher burnout. Research findings can help determine what keeps teachers in the profession and how teachers can be assisted in order to prevent attrition.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

We are pleased you have chosen to help the profession of Agricultural Education by completing this survey. The next page explains the purpose of this study and your rights as a participant. After agreeing to participate, you can proceed with the brief survey that will help us solve the ultimate problem of teacher shortage in Georgia Agricultural Education.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. The purpose of this study is to determine the primary factors involved in the retention of agriculture teachers and to determine how job satisfaction relates to that retention. This study will provide valuable information that will lead to a better understanding of the factors involved in teacher job satisfaction and improved retention of Georgia agriculture educators. The survey should take no longer than 20 minutes to complete.

By clicking "Agree" to the question below and continuing on to the following web page, you agree to take part in the study. This research is being conducted by Dr. John C. Ricketts of the Department of Agricultural Leadership and Communication at the University of Georgia in conjunction with Mrs. Abby Spruill Tippens, Agriculture Teacher at Pike County Middle School. Your participation is voluntary and you can refuse to participate or stop taking part in the survey at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits which you are otherwise entitled. You can ask to have information related to you returned to you, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

No discomforts or stresses are expected. Likewise, no risk of physical, psychological or economic harm to participants is foreseen. Because your responses to some of the questions may influence the worker/employer relationship if there were a breach in confidentiality, you are encouraged to complete the survey at a personal computer rather than a work computer on a school network.

The information collected in this study will be kept as confidential as is reasonably possible. Participant numbers will be used to determine follow-up contacts. After data collection, participant numbers will be removed from the data so that data cannot be attributed to specific individuals. Once data is collected, the completed surveys will be printed and all individual identifiers will be removed and replaced with a code. The electronic files from this study will be deleted on November 1, 2010 and the master key linking the code to the participant will be destroyed after the information is coded.

No individually-identifiable information about you or your responses will be shared with others. Internet communications are insecure and there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be

guaranteed due to the technology itself. However once the materials are received by the researcher, standard confidentiality procedures will be employed.

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research by telephone at: 706.540-9498 or e-mail at abbytippens@gmail.com.

By clicking "Agree" to the question below you are indicating you understand the procedures described above and you agree to participate in this study.

* * Please print a copy of this page for your records * *

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

I agree to the details of this research.

Yes _____ No _____

Please enter the following information:

Name: _____

School: _____

Address: _____

Address 2: _____

City/Town: _____

State: _____

ZIP/Postal Code: _____

Country: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Gender:

Male

Female

Please list your age in years: _____

Please list your ethnicity (i.e. Caucasian, African American, etc...): _____

Location of School by Region:

North

Central

South

Certification Type:

Traditional (completed)

Alternative/Provisional (completed)

- Alternative/Provisional (in process)
- Not certified (NOT in process)

Teaching Position:

- High School
- Middle School
- Young Farmer
- Other (please specify): _____

Length of contract:

- 12 Month
- 11 Month
- 10 Month
- Other (please specify): _____

Please enter the number of years you have taught agriculture: _____

Please list your highest education level (i.e. Bachelors, Masters, Specialist, Doctorate, etc.):

Extended Day Status:

- One hour per day
- None
- Other (please specify): _____

Class Load (per day):

- One class
- Two classes
- Three classes
- Four classes
- Five classes
- Six or more classes
- Other (please specify): _____

Number of Students Taught each year (just you if you are in a multi-teacher program):

- More than 196
- 141-196
- 85-140
- 29-84
- Fewer than 29

Please list the number of agriculture teachers at your school: _____

Please enter the number of years you have worked at your current school: _____

Please enter the number of years at you have worked at your current school: _____

Please list the number of years employed in an agricultural occupation prior to teaching: _____

Please respond to the following:

	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Undecided	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely
I am likely to leave the profession in the next five years.					
I am likely to leave the profession five to ten years from now.					
I am likely to leave the profession when I have at least 25 years of service for early retirement incentives.					
I will likely temporarily leave the profession for a period of time and return in the next ten years.					

If you answered “somewhat likely” or “very likely” to any of the questions above, which of the following is MOST likely to influence your decision to leave the profession?

- Retirement
- Children and Family Commitments
- Other Job Opportunities
- Relocation
- Extended Day/Extended Year Standards and Expectations
- Administrative Support
- Student Demographics and Behavior
- School Environment
- Salary
- Early Retirement
- Other (please specify): _____

Please respond to the following:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am provided adequate administrative support and backing by my state staff.					
I feel appreciated by my state staff (region coordinator and Area Teachers) for my work.					
I am assigned an appropriate amount of school activities (e.g., bus duty and/or lunchroom duty).					
I am assigned appropriate extracurricular activities (i.e., those which pertain to my program).					
I am satisfied with this job.					
I am an effective teacher (able to get students to learn as desired).					
My long-range goal is to continue teaching this program.					
I rarely feel that most other educators are more satisfied with their jobs than I am.					
I rarely feel vulnerable to criticism in my teaching.					
I seldom feel isolated.					
I feel appreciated by parents for my work with students.					
Students are interested in what I teach.					
I feel appreciated by my colleagues for my work.					
I am provided adequate administrative support and backing.					
I feel appreciated by students for my work.					
The school's facilities are adequate.					
My school has adequate supplies for my program.					
The administrators in my school are strong educational leaders.					
I feel encouragement from my administrators for my initiatives.					
The salary of this job is adequate.					
Society has realistic expectations of me.					
The amount of preparation time					

required for this program is adequate.					
What is expected of me is realistic.					
I feel appreciated by my administrators for my work.					
The hours of this job are satisfactory.					
The materials at my disposal are adequate for the needs of my program.					
The equipment at my school is adequate.					
I seldom think of changing jobs.					
The student to teacher ratio in my classes is appropriate.					
The students in my program are well behaved.					
Teachers have appropriate professional status within society.					
Even if I come into enough money so that I can live comfortably without working, I will remain in this position.					
Adequate promotional opportunities in education exist.					
I seldom feel a sense of burnout.					
Appropriate students are placed in my classes.					

Thank you for your participation. Ms. Abby Spruill Tippens will provide a report of her findings to the profession as soon as possible. Have a great rest of the year.

APPENDIX B

PRE-NOTICE E-MAIL

Dear Agriculture Educator,

You have been asked to participate in a research study on the contributions to job satisfaction and factors influencing the retention of agriculture teachers. Your contact information was obtained from the Georgia agricultural education teacher directory. Your input as an agricultural educator is highly valued in order to continually improve our profession and ultimately further the positive impact we can have on the students we serve.

The research study entitled “Contributions to job satisfaction and retention of Georgia Agriculture Educators” is being conducted by Dr. John Ricketts of the Department of Agricultural Leadership and Communication at the University of Georgia in conjunction with Mrs. Abby Tippens, Masters in Agricultural Leadership student. Your participation is voluntary and you can refuse to participate or stop taking part in the survey at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty.

The purpose of this study is to determine the primary factors involved in the retention of agriculture teachers and how job satisfaction relates to the retention of agriculture teachers. Benefits of participation in this study include improving the profession by contributing valuable information that will lead to a better understanding of the factors involved in teacher job satisfaction and could result in the improved retention of Georgia agriculture educators.

All individually identifiable information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form only. Your identity will not be associated with your responses in any published format.

I would be glad to answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the survey, and can be reached by telephone at: 706.540-9498 or e-mail at ASPRUILL@UGA.EDU.

To complete the survey, please go to the following link. It should take no longer than 20 minutes for you complete. Because of your responses to some of the questions may influence the worker/employer relationship if there were a breach in confidentiality, you are encouraged to complete the survey at a personal computer rather than a work computer on a school network.

Sincerely,

Abby S. Tippens
University of Georgia
Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication

APPENDIX C

REMINDER E-MAIL

Dear Agriculture Educator,

About two weeks ago you should have received a request to participate in a study trying to determine the contributions to job satisfaction and retention of Georgia Agriculture Teachers.

If you have already completed the online survey, please accept our sincere thanks. If not, please do so today. Your input is important, and this information could go a long way towards retaining agriculture teachers and strengthening our profession.

If you have any questions or if you did not receive the initial e-mail, please contact us at 706-540-9498 or by e-mail at ASPRUILL@UGA.EDU

Below is the link to complete the survey:

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation in this project.

Abby S. Tippens

University of Georgia

Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication

APPENDIX D

SCRIPT FOR FOLLOW-UP MEETING

Hello,

My name is Abby Tippens and I am working on my Masters in Agricultural Leadership Degree through the University of Georgia. I e-mailed you a little over a month ago about participating in a study about “Contributions to job satisfaction and retention of Georgia agriculture educators.”

I did not receive a completed online survey from you.

Would you mind taking a few minutes and filling out this survey? Your responses will be valuable in helping to determine the reasons agriculture teachers leave the profession and what factors are involved in job satisfaction of agriculture teachers. This information could help to retain agriculture educators and improve teacher job satisfaction in the future.

Thank you!