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FACTORS TO TEACHER RETENTION IN LEAVE:SECONDARY AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

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FACTORS TO LEAVE: TEACHER RETENTION IN SECONDARY AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

by

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Abstract

This study aimed to provide qualitative inquiry into the attrition rates of high school agriculture teachers in Tennessee. The supply does not equal the demand for high school agriculture teachers. The study investigated why teachers left the profession, their personal experiences while in the classroom, their feelings on preparedness, and identifiable trends among the participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with former secondary agricultural educators taught in a high school agricultural classroom between 2014 and 2019. Objective one sought to describe the demographic characteristics of secondary agricultural teachers. Two themes were found: Teachers who enter the agricultural education profession right out of college did not stay in the job for longer than five years. Teachers with traditional and professional licensure did not feel prepared for the classroom. Objective two was created to identify the reasons teachers left the profession. Four themes developed as follows: Agricultural teachers left their careers because they wanted to spend more time with their family. Agricultural teachers left the job because they felt they had no support. Agricultural teachers left the profession because of the time demands from the occupation. Agricultural teachers left the career because of the personal health issues from stressful work environments. Objective three investigated the relationship between personal and professional characteristics and teachers leaving the classroom. Four themes developed as follows: An agricultural teachers' love of agriculture and wanting to give back to the community is not enough to keep them in the profession. There is an impact on retention rates when having a veteran co-teacher in your agricultural program and high teacher turn over. Former teachers still feel very strongly about the future of agricultural education. The positive experiences while teaching is not enough to keep teachers in the classroom.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Appendices

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Many students entering college are not planning for a degree in education. Therefore, some educators reach the teaching profession through a non-traditional pathway. According to a study conducted by Duncan, Cannon, and Kitchel (2013), 70% of their respondents obtain certification through a traditional teacher preparation program. The others received certifications via an official route. Many careers and technical education (CTE) teachers are not prepared for the classroom. The research concluded that those CTE teachers who were traditionally certified reported being more competent and had more self-efficacy than the other group (Duncan et al., 2013). Those teachers who did not follow the traditional pathway have not completed pre-requisite courses in classroom management, modifications, lesson planning, and other essential teacher required tasks. Classroom management can be a challenge for many new teachers. How teachers manage their classrooms can affect the learning that a student experiences. These students then go on to be active members of society.

CTE teachers are often highly qualified in their focus area and enter teaching later in their careers. CTE teachers are highly knowledgeable in their subject matter but often find it challenging to juggle all the teachers' requirements. Therefore, they end up leaving the education field and enter into industry. Solomonson, Korte, Thieman, Retallick, and Keating (2018) reported that nearly half of the agricultural teachers leave the profession within five years.

Agricultural teachers are included in CTE. Agricultural teachers are faced with many challenges that general education teachers do not encounter. Agricultural teachers are responsible for covering their standards, providing a highly qualified learning environment, and training

Future Farmers of America (FFA) competitions. These expectations can be demanding and lead to teachers feeling overexerted, thus decreasing retention rates of the teachers.

CTE teachers are allowed more flexibility within their classrooms. According to research conducted by Bowen, Marx, Williams, and Napoleon (2017), CTE teachers reported greater flexibility within the classroom learning experience. Teachers of the study reported greater student engagement, which could be due to CTE courses being electives. The students' ability to choose their courses could encourage involvement. Flexibility, greater classroom control, and positive student engagement are all factors that can improve the chances of CTE teacher retention. (Bowen et al., 2017) When teachers feel good about their job and the efforts they put into it, they are more likely to stay in the profession.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine why secondary agricultural teachers left the classroom. This research focused on former high school agricultural teachers who left teaching to enter a new profession. Research questions were focused on determining the reasons for leaving teaching in agriculture.

The Theoretical/Conceptual Framework Guiding Research

The conceptual framework for this study was derived from the work of Solomonson et al., (2018). The literature on teacher attrition hypothesized that agricultural teachers' decision to leave was based on satisfaction, stress levels, and time dedications. In one study, agricultural teachers reported working as much as sixty hours per week, including weekends (Sorenson, McKim, & Velez, 2017). Figure 1 shows data collected in 2014 from the National Association of Agricultural Educators and the National Teach Ag Campaign. The graph displays the top reasons

why teachers left the profession. Retirement, agribusiness/industry, and other being the top three reasons teachers left.

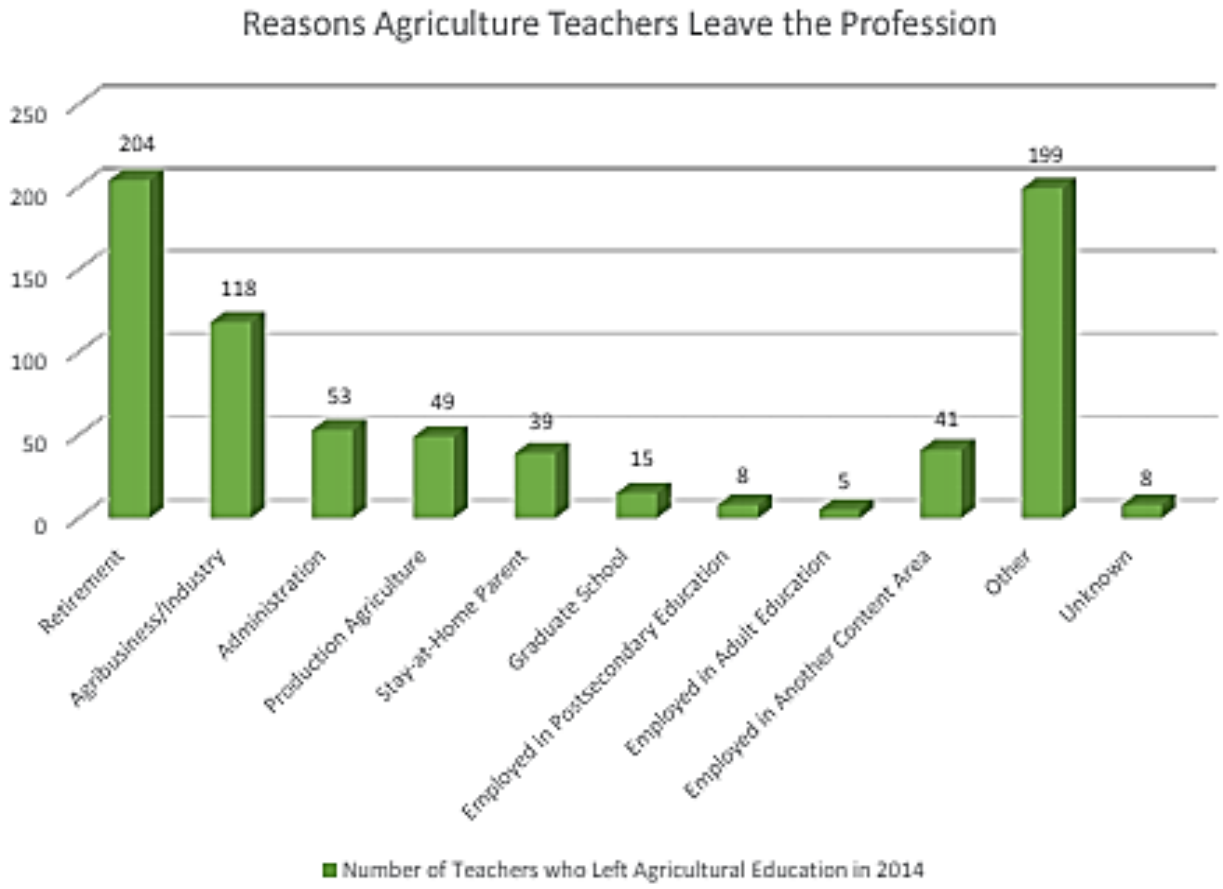

Figure 1. Reasons Agriculture Teachers Leave the Profession. A bar graph displaying the reasons agriculture teachers leave the profession from National Agricultural Education Supply and Demand Study, 2014, Executive Summary, retrieved from http://www.naae.org/teachag/Nationwide%20Profile.pdf

This work time demand causes a strain and interferes with family responsibilities. A study conducted by King, Rucker, and Duncan (2013) found that female agricultural teachers reported preparing paperwork and reports as the most stressful job responsibilities related to classroom teaching, followed by creating a new curriculum and lack of teaching materials. On top of classroom demands, agricultural teachers are responsible for managing FFA activities.

King et al. (2013) reported that preparing for proficiency applications, planning the FFA banquet, and preparing CDE teams created the most stress for agricultural teachers.

Modern literature finds that agricultural teachers entered the profession due to their love of agriculture and are very passionate about teaching their subject matter (Crutchfield, 2013). Crutchfield (2013) stated, “that agricultural educators love the industry they teach about and the students they teach it to” (p.16).

Research Questions

The following are research questions used for this study:

1. What are Tennessee agricultural teachers' personal and professional characteristics who decided to leave the secondary agricultural education profession?
2. What are the variables that impact the teachers’ final decision to leave the profession?
3. Is there a relationship between the professional and personal characteristics, attrition variables?

The Significance of the Study

This study is critical because the loss of teachers is costly. The annual recruitment costs and the hiring process only temporarily alleviate the problem (Crutchfield, Ritz, & Burris, 2013). The method of hiring new teachers costs time and taxpayer dollars, hindering student learning inside the classroom. The retention of good teachers is critical for student success. A teacher who is ready to leave the profession tends to perform poorly inside the school. Care about their performance is not a focus; therefore, students in these classrooms experience low-quality lessons.

Teachers are not entering the agricultural teaching profession as often as years past. So, as veteran teachers retire and teacher attrition rates increase, there are no replacements ready to fill the required job openings. New graduates are accepting jobs outside of the agricultural education classroom. This creates a national crisis of teacher shortages. De Lay and Washburn (2013) believe that this cycle of teacher turnover must be addressed to meet the needs of filling positions with qualified teachers. Programs tend to dissolve to allow funding in other areas within the school. According to De Lay and Washburn (2013) CTE and elective courses are the first to suffer. Funding is allocated to different classes required for graduation and that have state-mandated standardized exams associated with them. Additional programs are forced to operate with fewer teachers, more students per class, and fewer resources, thus creating more stress for the current teacher.

There is a need for programs that re-engage current agricultural teachers to balance work and personal life (Crutchfield et al., 2013). According to a study conducted by Crutchfield et al. (2013), balancing their own life and having too much responsibility hurt teacher retention and commitment to the profession. School administration and leaders in agricultural education need to be aware of this problem and sustain current professionals' commitment.

This research is critical to identify factors that cause teachers to leave the profession and implement coping mechanisms and other support to improve teacher retention. If the administration can detect teachers who feel burned-out early, administrators are more likely to step in and re-engage to prevent the teacher from leaving. The administration should also be more aware of what causes agricultural teachers to feel overwhelmed and stressed. If administrators understand these factors, they are more likely to avoid overloading teachers.

Those preventative steps should improve retention rates and thus assist in preserving secondary agricultural programs.

Definitions, Symbols, Abbreviations

Teacher Attrition – Solomonson et al. (2018) describe teacher attrition as a phenomenon in which teachers leave the profession that affects all education disciplines.

Demoralization - Many factors contribute to the reason a teacher leaves their profession. Teachers enter the field of education for moral rewards (Santoro, 2013). Santoro (2013) describes demoralization as the change from what used to bring pleasure to the workplace no longer does. The moral rewards no longer exist, and teachers are not able to connect with their students. Unsupportive environments can cause a stable teacher to break down eventually. Teachers often feel demoralized. Teachers can no longer connect with their work and feel it has no real purpose.

Factors of Stress- A study conducted by Lawver and Smith (2014) identified events that were more likely to create stress for Utah agricultural teachers as those "that involved time management, discipline, and student motivation" (p.83). Teachers responded to the survey with statements about over-commitment, not enough time to prepare, lack of respect, classroom disciplinary problems, and insufficient professional growth (Lawver & Smith, 2014). Boone and Boone (2009) found similar results from their research that managing time and filling out paperwork was a problem many agriculture teachers faced in West Virginia. Balancing activities, motivation, facilities, equipment, and discipline were all identified as factors that caused new teachers (Boone & Boone, 2009). The teachers with under seven years of teaching experience reported having more severe problems than those with more experience (Boone & Boone, 2009).

Agricultural Education- Agricultural education is focused on preparing students for success in the world. Students learn about the food they eat, the fiber they wear, and the natural resources they preserve and use. Agricultural education programs are divided into three components; supervised agricultural experience programs that focus on work-based learning, classroom and laboratory instruction based on contextual learning, and student leadership organizations, including the FFA (Agricultural Education, National FFA Organization, 2018).

FFA- According to the National FFA website (What is FFA, National FFA Organization, 2018), FFA is a youth organization that focuses on agriculture and leadership. The letters stand for Future Farmers of America, but this organization is not just for students planning to be farmers. The FFA welcomes all students who have a passion for growing themselves as leaders, no matter what career path they intend to pursue. "Premier leadership, personal growth, and career success" (What is FFA, National FFA Organization, 2018) focus on each student involved in the FFA.

CTE- Career and technical education (CTE) programs in secondary school allow students to directly learn about various jobs and benefits indirectly by improving engagement. These programs have been a mainstay in the educational system for many years (Wilkin & Nwoke, 2011). CTE assists students in their pursuit of a career through post-secondary learning opportunities and practices lifelong learning experiences. These programs motivate the student to become involved in their learning by practicing real-life problem-solving. Students who participate in CTE programs become more engaged in their communities (Brown, 2003). One problem CTE programs face today is the shortage of highly competent and qualified teachers who are willing and able to prepare students for success in the real world (Wilkin & Nwoke, 2011).

Teacher Retention- Educators are passionate about what they teach. After the data analysis from a study conducted by Lemons, Brashears, Burris, Meyers, and Price (2015), teachers reported that they "truly enjoyed and were passionate about teaching agriculture" (p.21). Lemons et al. (2015) suggested that creating a structured mentoring program would benefit novice teachers to better acclimate to their new profession. This mentoring program will allow new teachers to build a relationship with experienced teachers. Despite the stressful demands and expectations from work, some agricultural teachers decide to continue teaching because of their love of helping young people and their belief in agriculture (Crutchfield, 2013).

Mid-Career Teachers- For this study, mid-career teachers are identified as those with 6-15 years of classroom experience. Solomonson et al. (2018) suggest that time and money should be allocated towards this group of teachers to improve retention rates. Mid-career teachers are more stable, expressing a sense of professional confidence and more comfortable teaching patterns (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). Solomonson and Retallick (2018) noted that these teachers are more comfortable experimenting with innovative classroom activities. These teachers also reflect on their decisions for entering the educational field by evaluating past work with future career plans (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018).

Novice Teachers- The teachers who fit into this category have 1-5 years of experience. Solmonson and Retallick (2018) divide this category into three substages; early, middle, and late. The first novice is focused on surviving the new career changes. Middle novice teachers are more focused on teaching itself. At the same time, concerns on student impaction are characteristics of late novice teachers.

Late-career Teachers- Teachers in this category have at least sixteen years of experience in the teaching profession. Early in this category, teachers are characterized by having a sense of

serenity and are comfortable with their career (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). Teachers who are late in this group are more disengaged and are focused on life outside the classroom (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018).

Leavers- For this research, this category includes teachers who left the classroom for a different profession. One study conducted by Solomonson and Retallick (2018) identified leavers as those who investigated other jobs outside of agricultural education. Their research reported that more than half of the participates fit into this group.

Stayers-Teachers in this category have not explored other career options outside of agricultural education. Crutchfield (2015) believes that educators continue to teach because they "love growing young people who will be successful no matter what they do in life" (p.16). Teachers who experience fulfillment and engagement are more likely to be dedicated to staying in the classroom (Crutchfield, 2015).

Summary

In summary, teacher shortage is a national problem that is affecting the future of the field. There is a national shortage of CTE teachers, causing a severe problem (Wilkin & Nwoke, 2011). CTE teachers are at the point of retiring in their careers, affecting the supply of available teachers (Wilkin & Nwoke, 2011). Teachers are not entering the educational field fast enough to fill the required positions. Teachers who are currently in the classroom face many challenges that make them reconsider their career decision and seek work elsewhere. Challenging students, increasing demands, lack of respect, and time commitments are a few of the driving factors that make teachers find non-classroom work. Educational leaders must take this issue seriously to prevent this phenomenon from continuing. For society to operate smoothly, students must be able to enter the workforce ready for success.

The world of education is continuously changing. Thus, student demographics change, causing some agricultural teachers to feel threatened that their programs will be discontinued. (Lemons et al., 2015) Teachers in the world of agriculture enter the classroom because they are passionate about their subject area; they enjoy their students and the rush of competition. Many agricultural teachers remember how their high school programs benefited them. (Lemons et al., 2015)

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

With all the recent news focused on improving students' mental health to prevent school shootings, has anyone stopped to think about the teachers? Richards (2012) states that “it is true that ‘children are our future,’ but teachers lead the way” (p. 312). Today’s teachers express that they are underpaid and unappreciated. (Fernet, Guay, Senécal, & Austin, 2012). A school’s administration, coworkers, and financial support are all factors that influence a teachers’ satisfaction with their decision to stay in the classroom (Hasselquist, Herndon, & Kitchel, 2017). Establishing positive relationships is essential to develop a support group that includes colleagues, other agricultural teachers, family, and administration.

A review of the literature was conducted to evaluate personal factors, including demographics and professional characteristics of mid-career agricultural teachers, comparing teacher development and satisfaction levels, understanding working environments, and how they correlate to retention or attrition rates, compensation, and current coping mechanisms used in education. Each factor was then focused on professional and personal characteristics. The majority of teachers who responded to a study conducted in Oregon reported ‘slight to moderate’ when asked about their job satisfaction and professional commitment to teaching (Sorensen & McKim, 2014).

Burnout

According to Santoro (2013), burnout is related to personal psychological properties. Burnout is “a natural by-product of teaching in demanding schools” (Santoro, p.346, 2013). A study conducted by Bitsadze and Japaridze (2014) in Georgia focused on recognizing teacher burnout and the personal and social factors that impacted burnout. The research found that burned out teachers experienced problems with emotional exhaustion and reduced personal

achievement. Male teachers reported more burnout about personal achievement and depersonalization, but females experienced more emotional burnout (Bitsadze & Japaridze, 2014). The study also identified that teachers responsible for a higher number of students tend to suffer more emotional exhaustion.

Yildirim's (2017) study in Turkey supports the above findings. Teachers who are experiencing "stress over time and do not see any way out" (Richards, 2012, p. 307) are more likely to become burned out. Depression becomes a problem, and teachers begin to withdraw from others. This problem can affect personal relationships and life outside of the work environment. Ferguson, Mang, and Frost (2017) advised prioritizing self-care as a necessity. Emotional well-being is vital in the prevention of burnout.

The research conducted by Bitsadze & Japaridze (2014) stated that novice teachers displayed the lowest levels of burnout but are expected to see higher levels of burnout as years of teaching increase. Their study found that teachers who have 4-10 years of experience reported the highest levels of emotional exhaustion. Sorensen and McKim (2014) stated their research found no statistical difference between novice and other teaching experience categories about satisfaction with their job, balancing work and life, and professional commitment.

Richards (2012) believes that the teacher's attitude and performance are critical to the students' academic improvement. Richards feels strongly about understanding and acknowledging the importance of preventing teacher burnout is a concern for society. Yildirim (2017) supports Richards' study by stating that "the primary function of teachers is to provide societies with education" (p.13). Yildirim (2017) goes on to state that "stress and burnout in teachers have considerable effects on their student" (p.13). This effect has an impact on the

future of society. Andre-Dixon (2017) believes that “being a teacher is the noblest profession and one that allows an individual to inspire the masses” (p.43).

Personal Factors

After reviewing the literature, most mid-career teachers in agriculture completed a traditional program for obtaining teacher certification (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). During professional development and in-service training, mid-career teachers are often grouped with the overall teaching population, and there is little concern for their unique needs (De Lay & Washburn, 2013). This broad grouping puts them at a higher risk of feeling unfulfilled professionally and can increase the chances of leaving the teaching profession (De Lay & Washburn, 2013).

Commitment and competence are two factors that influence teacher attrition. One study conducted by McKim, Sorenson, Velez, and Henderson (2017) found that teachers gain competence and commitment as they gain experience. The authors suggested that teachers who remain in the profession are committed and express high competence levels. One way to reduce conflict and stress is by gaining experience; as teachers learn new skills, they appreciate making accommodations to their personal and professional roles (Crutchfield, 2013).

Teachers at different levels in their teaching experience express commitment in different ways. Being a new teacher is difficult, and often novice teachers are excited about their new job. This excitement translates into commitment. McKim et al. (2017) recommend providing opportunities that support new teachers in balancing traditional novice-teacher challenges and facilitating FFA and other specific agricultural program requirements. In contrast, teachers who are late in their careers are more committed to retiring. Mid-career teachers are the most vulnerable about commitment. According to the study, mid-career teachers are at a crucial stage

where commitment levels can help decide to leave or stay in the profession (McKim et al.,2017). This crucial stage is where professional development that supports commitment and competence can improve teacher retention.

A review of the literature identified that majority are females within the group of mid-career agricultural teachers between the ages of 31-39 (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). The majority of this group had received at least a master's degree and were married with children. A study conducted by Sorensen and McKim (2014) reported that most agricultural teachers in Oregon were mid-career, married with children, and had an average age in their thirties. An increasing number of female teachers are entering the agricultural education profession all over the nation (Sorensen & McKim, 2014). A study conducted in Texas found that more than sixty percent of the female teachers were under thirty years old and had taught five years or fewer (Hainline, Ulmer, Ritz, Burris, Gibson, 2015). Most of these respondents also reported being married. Sorensen and McKim's (2014) study showed that in a situation where teachers are married to a working spouse, this creates an inter-role conflict, and this conflict relates to levels of stress and job satisfaction. Sorensen and McKim (2014) suggest that due to the changing demographics of agricultural teachers entering the profession, which is more females in dual-earning families, a proactive measure should be taken to more in-depth evaluate the ability to balance work and life of both women and men, more in-depth.

Teacher Development

Touchstone (2015) mentions a current trend in Idaho of an increasing number of teachers who are industry certified versus traditional university certification programs. A study conducted in 2019 by the National Agricultural Education Supply and Demand Study found that of the non-licensed individuals *(n=141*) who were hired to teach high school agriculture, 41 were graduates

from other agricultural programs, 51 from agribusiness, farming, or industry, 26 from general education, and 11 graduated from areas outside of agriculture or the educational field (Foster, Lawver, & Smith, 2020). Table 1 displays the sources of new hires to high school agricultural programs from the nation-wide study.

Source	*f*	%
Licensed ag teacher (moved to new school)	400	28.2
Newly licensed undergraduate (prepared in-state)	391	27.5
Alternative licensure route completer	235	16.5
Non-licensed individual	141	9.9
Unknown	89	6.3
Newly licensed graduate (prepared in-state)	79	5.6
Newly licensed undergraduate (prepared out-of-state)	60	4.2
Other	19	1.3
Newly licensed graduate (prepared out-of-state)	6	0.4

Table 1. Sources of new hires from the data collected by the National Agricultural Education Supply and Demand Study, 2019, retrieved from http://aaaeonline.org/Resources/Documents/NSD2019Summary.pdf

This alternative certification path started to recruit teachers to meet unfilled teaching positions (Rocca & Washburn, 2006). Rocca and Washburn (2006) noticed in their research that most teachers who completed the traditional certification path were females who belonged to a younger age group, with few years of agriculture-related occupational experiences. In contrast, non-traditional certified teachers were older, obtained higher degrees, and had more agriculture-related occupational experiences. Rocca and Washburn (2006) defined teachers whom they classified as alternatively certified as those who received a bachelor's degree in a content area

other than agricultural education. Animal science, agricultural business and economics, and environmental horticulture were the top three degrees received in their study (Rocca & Washburn, 2016).

The industry-certified teachers with fewer than five years of experience who responded to this survey reported needing more training implementing FFA and supervised agricultural experience activities and developing engaging curriculum and management within the classroom (Touchstone, 2015). Rocca and Washburn (2006) reported that certified teachers lack formal instructional and teaching methods and pedagogy. However, this lack of prior training did not manifest into lower self-efficacy (Rocca & Washburn, 2006).

Duncan et al. (2013) mention in their study that traditionally certified teachers have more pedagogical experience and argue that this could be due to their exposure during the teacher education classes and internship programs. Rocca and Washburn's (2006) study found similar experiences. These teachers reported having more self-efficacy when relating to teaching and learning theories (Duncan et al., 2013). On the other hand, occupationally certified teachers reported more self-efficacy regarding the industry and actual career experiences (Duncan et al., 2013). This confidence of self-efficacy was similar to what Rocca and Washburn (2006) found in their research. There was no apparent difference between their perceived teacher efficacy between teachers who were alternatively or traditionally certified.

Professional development structure should be designed to reflect the changing demographics of teachers entering agricultural education (Touchstone, 2015). These changes will better prepare and support novice teachers in eliminating stress, improving self-competency, and increasing engagement, leading to higher retention rates. Specialists designing professional development training should include strategies that aim at improving time management

(Lambert, Torres, & Tummons, 2012). De Lay and Washburn (2013) recommend including opportunities for teacher collaboration and discussing the importance of collaborating during existing professional development.

Boone and Boone (2009) recommend involving national and local agricultural stakeholders to design a plan to retain highly qualified teachers to improve retention rates. These organizations also need to develop a way to encourage students to enter the teaching profession. These programs must adequately prepare teachers at different levels of their experience. Rocca and Washburn (2006) recommend designing programs where students can obtain a teaching certification while working on their master's degrees. No matter the certification path, agricultural teachers must teach math, reading, and the science skills required to meet graduation needs (Rocca & Washburn, 2006). Training before actually going into the classroom to better prepare them for future problems, induction programs once they enter the profession, and quality in-service to improve motivation and commitment (Boone & Boone, 2009) may improve teacher retention rates.

Intrinsic motivation can promote or interrupt overall job satisfaction (Touchstone, 2015). Mid-career teachers are not provided specialized professional development to accommodate their desired needs, thus requiring them to be intrinsically motivated (De Lay & Washburn, 2013). This primary motivation can help new teachers transition into the profession and improve the retention of mid-career teachers. The research conducted by Touchstone (2015) recognized that balancing life and work, balancing the amount of work, and effectively managing time were all motivational factors. Being emotionally invested can override some of the daily discouragements that often hinder professional commitment (Crutchfield, 2013).

Working Environment

Teachers who have intentions to remain in the classroom value specific perspectives of their job. Being a part of their students' success gives these teachers great enjoyment (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). According to Solomonson and Retallick (2018) article, teachers who have considered leaving the classroom often worry about how it would affect their students. Agricultural teachers are very passionate about their profession, and it is often hard to detach the work component from emotions.

According to Lemons, Brashears, Burris, Meyers, Price (2015), agriculture is a unique content area that often has misconceptions from the public's perspective. These misconceptions are often a driving factor that motivates teachers to continue to disprove these misconstructions. Due to changes in student demographics and legislation in education, many agricultural teachers feel that the content area may be threatened (Lemons et al., 2015).

Teachers within the agricultural education pathways enjoy the flexibility and ability to avoid monotonous days. Many agricultural teachers still possess the freedom to teach how they want. Teachers experience high levels of autonomy (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). According to Sorensen and McKim (2014), the ability to offer more flexibility within the workplace can give agricultural educators more available resources and improve the ability to adapt to changes they face in their lives. Thus, potentially reducing the likelihood of leaving the profession.

Agricultural teachers are responsible for managing their FFA chapters. A study conducted by Rose, Stephens, Stripling, Cross, Sanok, and Brawner (2016) reported that students involved in the FFA have a sense of belonging, physically and emotionally. FFA programs focus on building self-confidence and aiding members in reaching their highest potential (Rose et al., 2016). Students want a place to feel safe and belong. FFA has provided a gateway for students to

meet peers and platforms to fulfill their basic needs of love and residence (Rose et al., 2016). The FFA and agricultural programs are beneficial in preparing students for success in the classroom and outside. But, managing an FFA chapter can add stress and responsibilities to an agricultural teacher's plate.

Administration can build or break an agriculture program. Respondents from research conducted by Solomonson & Retallick (2018) stated that support from their stakeholders is precious in evaluating the decision to stay or leave. Teachers feel that unsupportive administration "could be the downfall" (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018, p.11) to an agriculture program. This lack of support can increase attrition rates.

Teachers who felt like they belonged to their working environment and obtained support at school experienced more satisfaction with their job (Hasselquist et al., 2017). According to the research conducted by Hasselquist, Herndon, and Kitchel (2017), school districts that provided support for novice agricultural teachers had more exceptional experiences of success within the classroom. Agricultural teachers not only want help and communication from their school district but other co-teachers in their content area as well (De Lay & Washburn, 2013). These teachers desire interactions, and if isolation occurs, these teachers are more likely to look for a career outside of education (De Lay & Washburn, 2013).

Many agricultural teachers work in the same school districts they attended as high school students. This connection creates an involvement that is deeply rooted in program development. These teachers are devoted to the success of the programs they have built (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). Many educators feel that they have invested too much into their programs to leave them. They have a connection with their programs, home, and community (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018).

An agricultural program's success often comes at the expense of losing involvement in a teacher's personal life. Success creates a struggle to balance out-of-classroom obligations and family time. Hainline et al. (2015) mention a linkage between work responsibilities and the teacher's age and life stage. Their study reported that over sixty percent of the female respondents said that their age was under thirty. They suggested that this age group can experience an elevated level of family and work conflict due to their trying to establish a family.

When teachers become parents, this factor becomes vital in reevaluating their career choice, and they start to reconsider other jobs (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). Having strong support from their families is critical in encouraging engagement and teacher retention.

Teachers who have colleague support tend to experience higher personal efficacy levels about how they perceive their influence on students within their classroom (Hasselquist et al., 2017). When teachers can collaborate, they are challenged to perform better and improve commitment (De Lay & Washburn, 2013). De Lay and Washburn (2013) believe that a critical factor to a teacher's satisfaction levels, commitment to teaching, and career development is his/her experience with peer collaboration. Collaboration is not gossiping or complaining about the building; it involves connecting with the purpose (De Lay & Washburn, 2013).

Compensation

Research conducted by Solomonson et al. (2018) reported that compensation was the least influential factor in a teacher's final decision to leave the classroom. When mid-career teachers were asked if they wanted more time or compensation, they responded by wanting their time back (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). Research also suggests that if teachers are expected to stay in the career, they should be compensated with adequate pay (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). A study conducted in West Virginia identified similar results; financial rewards were

perceived as a problem for teachers who just entered the profession and remained to teach (Boone & Boone, 2009).

A study conducted in Missouri reported that 95 percent of teachers work more than 45 hours a week (Lambert et al., 2012). In Texas, agricultural teachers worked more than 58 hours per week (Hainline et al., 2015). Research conducted in Georgia reported that agricultural teachers worked an average of 57 hours during a workweek (Murray, Flowers, Croom, & Wilson, 2011). This time devoted to work can limit the amount of time agricultural teachers have to dedicated to their families. The stress that comes with being a teacher, coupled with long work hours, can hurt their home lives (Hainline et al., 2015).

Coping Mechanisms

According to Santoro (2013), teacher burnout can be avoided with self-care and by creating productive boundaries. Teachers are not provided with the ability to manage stress. A study conducted by Lawver and Smith (2014) reported that the average stress level of the teachers who responded scored in "the extreme stress category as outlined by the American Psychological Association" (p. 81). Learning coping skills, social support from colleagues and administration, and planning a future occupation are crucial factors in preventing burnout (Yildirim, 2017). Schools should provide the opportunity for teachers to cooperate and work with each other on a common goal. Wolgast and Fischer (2017) believe that supportive colleagues help to decrease levels of stress.

Teachers who do not interact with coworkers tend to experience feelings of being alone. Lawver and Smith (2014) found that agricultural teachers' two most common coping mechanisms distanced themselves from coworkers and were more confrontational when addressed with issues or problems. These mechanisms detach the teacher's emotions from the

stress and increase their aggression and hostility toward the cause of the burden. By providing the support needed, teachers are better equipped to handle the stressful demands of the career, more likely to offer better quality lessons, and improve the relationships between students and teachers (Wolgast & Fischer, 2017).

Stressed teachers lack self-efficiency, which decreases their enthusiasm to create quality lessons. Students who suffer from mental and physical health issues are less motivated to learn (Wolgast & Fischer, 2017). A mentoring program between late-career teachers and mid-career teachers could provide the support needed to spark enthusiasm. According to Lawver and Smith (2014), teachers with more years of experience were more likely to view a stressful situation as an opportunity for growth and development. The techniques used to practice this coping mechanism could be shared through a mentoring program.

Miller (2011) suggests organizing a share day, where teachers bring lessons and provide feedback to assist teachers with lesson development. Philanthropic support is often used to cope with stress. A study conducted by Ferguson et al. (2017) identified that teachers were more likely to communicate with co-workers, family, and friends as their workload stress increased. The ability to understand that other teachers may be experiencing similar issues can decrease isolation from current teachers. Accepting change and understanding "the fluidity of changing schools and systems" (Andre-Dixon, 2017, p.43) will help decrease stress.

The administration must be aware of the factors that create stress and be willing to provide professional development to support "effectively managing and coping with teacher stress" (Lawver & Smith, 2014, p.88). School administration may be unaware of the stress level of their teachers. Many teachers do not feel comfortable discussing concerns about their stress with their principals. Research has indicated that principals may be the reason for creating a

workload and professional relationship stress. (Ferguson et al., 2017) These findings could be a reason that the administration is unaware of the stress issues within their buildings.

Clement (2017) suggests creating a healthy lifestyle by eating right, sleep, and exercising adequately. She also recommends limiting obligations and learning to say no. This recommendation supports the literature from Lambert, Torres, and Tummons (2012). Clement (2017) mentions communication as a method of coping. Instead of worrying about changes, ask administrators before jumping to a conclusion.

"Positive self-communication [does] help resolve stressful issues" (Clement, 2017, p.40). A practical step in establishing communication is to connect with other teachers. There is no need to waste time trying to reinvent the wheel only to find obstacles. Another teacher may have tried the same method and can advise what works and what to change. Teaching is about working together to create a better student. If co-teachers do not have the answer, Clement (2017) suggests using the internet to seek advice. Teachers perform better with verbal reassurance and by being able to share their experiences and feelings (Lambert et al., 2012).

Professional Development

Professional development can help eliminate stress. Professional learning communities (PLC) are small groups of teachers who meet to solve an issue. Some PLCs read motivational books, discuss standardized test scores, create new school policies, or share classroom management tips. What is unique about a PLC "is that teachers lead and support each other" (Clement, 2017, p. 41). This uniqueness creates ownership and "positive collegiality" (Clement, 2017, p.41). The author emphasizes that "preventing isolationism in schools is a stress-buster" (Clement, 2017, p.41).

Teachers should find time to get a head start. Coming to work early, or staying late, allows a teacher to better prepare for the day. Getting behind in grading papers and creating lesson plans can create the feeling of being on a time crunch and overloaded. A study conducted in Georgia reported that high school agricultural teachers worked an average of nine hours a week preparing for their classrooms (Murray et al., 2011). Taking the time to complete the prep work and acknowledging upcoming deadlines and activities within the school can a teacher be better prepared. A school has certain times that are more stressful than others, and obligations outside the classroom can be demanding. Murray et al. (2011) noted in their study that agricultural teachers spend an average of two hours a week devoted to responsibilities outside the classroom. Being prepared for these times and have a coping mechanism in mind can help alleviate stress. Reflection and balance can also reduce stress. Try to balance life and work. A study conducted by Crutchfield et al. (2013) suggested developing mentoring programs to allow time to share strategies for coping and understanding how to balance life and improve current teachers' reengagement.

Crutchfield (2013) suggests implementing a time during professional development or in-service that is dedicated for teachers to group into their “professional life phase” (p. 15) and have in-depth conversations about issues they are facing. This discussion will allow teachers to learn that they are not alone in many problems they challenge. Teachers felt better knowing they shared issues and felt more like a community (Crutchfield, 2013).

One study conducted by Touchstone (2015) suggests that teacher education programs need to consider implementing courses that focus on areas of concern and better prepare teachers to transition into local classrooms. These courses need to be relevant to minimize the professional development required once teachers enter the classroom (Touchstone, 2015).

Touchstone (2015) recommends identifying program needs and creating materials distributed to local school districts and stakeholders to better inform the administration about how agricultural programs should be operated.

Time Management

Novice agricultural teachers have difficulty telling others no, which leads to procrastination (Lambert et al., 2012). Lambert et al. (2012) suggest that agricultural teachers need to learn how to delegate tasks and, respectively, say "no." Being able to spread the workload out, utilizing people from the community, and learning how to divide the projects into more manageable pieces can help reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed (Lambert et al., 2012). Hainline et al. (2015) also recommends removing non-obligatory duties and utilizing the ability to delegate tasks as a means to lessen the workload. Time management workshops would be beneficial in assisting in learning these skills. Nevertheless, Murray et al. (2011) state that when teachers are given this training, it is often before they enter the classroom and are not in that life phase yet; therefore, the training is not as productive.

The research conducted in Missouri correlated a relationship between self-confidence and stress levels; the more a teacher can manage their time, the less stress they feel (Lambert et al., 2012). Sorensen and McKim (2014) mentioned that stress might occur because of life's roles. Still, a teacher's ability to balance life and work and manage stress can affect their job satisfaction and professional commitments. Murray et al. (2011) mentioned that the amount of work hours, demands from after-school activities, and fatigue were all identified as barriers to achieving family responsibilities.

Balancing Life and Work

Work-life balance refers to a teacher's ability to manage conflicts between family and work roles (Crutchfield, 2013). This conflict can be intruding in either direction, personal or professional, and can negatively impact a teacher's decision to continue teaching (Crutchfield, 2013). According to a study conducted by Sorensen and McKim (2014), female agricultural teachers who responded reported having a higher ability to balance work and life and reported less satisfaction with their job and less professional commitment. After conducting a statistical analysis of the data, there was no statistical correlation between the demographic variables and satisfaction, the balance between work and life, and professional commitment. Teachers from the study who were not married reported having a better ability to balance work and life and more satisfaction and dedication to their job. Hainline et al. (2015) reported that female agricultural teachers spent seven-and-one-half more hours a week on their families' responsibilities than their male counterparts. This imbalance suggests that traditional gender roles are still present in the home lives of agricultural teachers.

Murray et al. (2011) reported that female agricultural teachers noted having more household responsibilities than male agricultural teachers in Georgia. These responsibilities included grocery shopping, meal preparation, and child care duties. Their female respondents reported having eighty percent of the childcare burden (Murray et al., 2011). This extra responsibility can create difficulties in managing a teacher's time to prepare and grow their agricultural program and growing their families.

Sorensen and McKim (2014) identified a positive relationship between a teacher's ability to balance life and work with higher satisfaction levels on the job and professional commitment. A better ability to balance leads to more satisfaction. Hainline et al. (2015) suggested that time

spent with family may positively affect work life. A teacher may feel more competent when he/she can balance work and family responsibilities. One unique finding from the study in Texas was that agricultural teachers had a higher divorce rate than the state average (Hainline et al., 2015). The researchers recommended increasing the priority of family time and obligations. Murray et al. (2011) found that married teachers reported balancing life and career.

The Future of Teacher Certification and Teacher Retention

Motivating students to enter the teaching profession is a necessary step in addressing the shortage issue. Figure 2 shows the demand for high school agricultural teachers in Tennessee.

Tennessee Agriculture Teacher Supply and Demand Profile

2015-2019 Demand

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Teachers FT/PT F/M Alt Cert /Non-licensed New Hire origin IS/OS Contract Days Starting Salary average African American Caucasian	336 333/3 115/221 15	357 357/0 131/226 0	340 339/1 124/216 7/0	353 349/4 145/203 0/8 7/7 60 36400	379 379/0 174/205 6/0 8/0 40 43,600 (12 months) 7 372
Programs New positions New programs Positions Lost Programs closed Positions needed	207 3.5 2 3 23.5	211 7 2 3 0 32	208 0 0 3 1 15	222 6 5 2 1 22	228 5 4 3 2 22
Teachers who left SBAE	23 1 Production Agriculture 1 Other Education Area 1 Administration 1 Post-Secondary Education 1 Graduate School 1 Teaching Agriculture in another state 6 Retirement 1 Death 4 Terminated 5 Unknown 1 Extension	28 3 Ag Business 1 Production Agriculture 1 Administration 3 Ag Ed Leadership 1 Post-Secondary Education 1 Graduate School 1 Health 3 Stay at home parent 10 Retirement 3 Terminated 1 Unknown	15 2 ag business 1 ag ed leadership 2 grad school 2 moved out of state 4 retirement 3 unknown 1 other	18 3 ag business 2 other ed content area 2 admin 1 extension 3 teaching ag other state 1 health 1 stay at home parent 2 retirement 3 unknown	20 6 other content area 1 school admin 1 grad school 1 teaching ag out state 1 stay at home caregiver 7 retirement 2 non-renewal 1 unknown

Figure 2. Tennessee Agriculture Teacher Demand Profile. The demand profile for agricultural teachers in Tennessee from the National Association of Agricultural Educators, 2019, retrieved from http://aaaeonline.org/Teacher-Supply-and-Demand

Industry and stakeholders in education must come together in a cooperative effort to develop programs that will better influence workers in the industry to pursue a career in teaching

and better prepare current students for success in the industry (Wilkin & Nwoke, 2011). Wilkin and Nwoke (2011) recommend helping with tuition to those students who have an associate's degree in technical content areas if they continue their education by taking required courses for teaching certifications. They also recommend branching out to the military to find people with the technical talent to teach CTE. Streamlining certification programs could increase the number of talented CTE teachers (Wilkin & Nwoke, 2011).

Murray et al. (2011) recommend providing new teachers with training on setting activity and involvement limits to prevent burnout. They also recommend developing a mentoring program for novice teachers and young teachers with families. This extra support can help create the required skills necessary for balancing their careers and personal lives.

Summary

In conclusion, teachers often leave the classroom experience psychological exhaustion referred to as burnout. Teachers express concern about reduced personal achievement, depersonalization, and emotional burnout with burnout (Bitsadze & Japaridze, 2014). This psychological problem comes from teachers experiencing prolonged stress with no answer to their problems (Richards, 2012). According to Bitsadze and Japaridze (2014), teachers who have less than ten years of experience report having the most extreme levels of emotional exhaustion.

After a review of the literature, the following personal factors were noticed. Commitment and competence influence attrition rates. Teachers gain both as they spend more years in the classroom. The literature expressed the importance of providing learning opportunities to support new teachers in developing competence and commitment to the classroom while balancing work and life (McKim et al., 2017).

Another personal factor to mention is the increase in female teachers entering the profession. Solomonson & Retallick (2018) found that most agricultural teachers are females under the age of 40 and usually married with children. This change in demographics from past agricultural teachers creates new struggles to balance raising a family and starting a new career (Sorensen & McKim, 2014).

After reviewing literature relating to teacher development, it was found that an increasing number of teachers obtained certification through a non-traditional pathway. This recruiting method was developed to meet the demand requirements to fill vacant teaching positions (Rocca & Washburn, 2006). They noticed that majority of those who completed the traditional certification pathway were young females with less than five years of agricultural-related experiences in the workforce. At the same time, those who completed the non-traditional pathway were older and had more prior experience working in the agricultural profession. Teachers who took the traditional certification pathway expressed more experience with lesson planning, preparing formal instruction, teaching methods, and other basic classroom management tools (Rocca & Washburn, 2006). However, those who were industry certified lacked knowledge in these areas.

The working environment of a teacher has a lot of impact on retention rates. Agriculture teachers enjoy autonomy and freedom to teach what they are passionate about (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). Administrative support is critical in agricultural teacher retention. Teachers who feel that their administration does not support them will most likely leave the profession (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). Systems where extra support for new teachers was implemented, had greater success with teachers staying in the classroom (Hasselquist et al.,

2017). Colleagues and support from their families are also crucial in keeping a teacher feeling efficient.

When researching the literature relating to compensation, it was found to be the least influential factor when deciding to leave the job. Teachers were more concerned with their expected time requirements (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). Many studies reported agriculture teachers to work many hours beyond the typical classroom day (Lambert et al., 2012), (Hainline et al., 2015), (Murray et al., 2011). Long hours after a typical workday can make it hard to balance life expectations.

Teachers need to learn how to manage the stress created by working in an agricultural classroom. Stress can be detrimental to a teacher's health and increase attrition levels (Yildirim, 2017). Providing training on coping mechanisms for stress, improving colleague/administrative support, and learning to balance life and work are all critical steps in prolonging the longevity of an agricultural teacher's professional career (Wolgast & Fischer, 2017).

Professional development for agricultural teachers can assist in preventing the feeling of isolation (Clement, 2017). Designing professional development directed specifically for new agricultural teachers can help them turn stressful situations into opportunities to grow as an educator (Murray et al., 2011). Educating the administration on the demands of an active agricultural program can help create a support system for the teacher.

Learning how to properly manage time is an important step in growing as an educator. Being able to say "no" and understanding that it is okay to not achieve and participate in everything is a way of decreasing stress (Lambert et al., 2012). Having the ability to manage time properly is important when learning to balance time and work. Family time is important. Married teachers have more difficulty in obtaining this balance (Sorensen & McKim, 2014).

Female agriculture teachers spend many hours tending to their families' needs (Hainline et al., 2015). These expectations make it difficult for female agriculture teachers to meet work and family demands.

In conclusion, preserving the future of agriculture education is crucial to increase the number of people entering the profession. Wilkin and Nwoke (2011) suggest working with industry in influencing people from the agriculture industry and military to pursue careers in education. They also suggest streamlining teacher certification programs would benefit from promoting the occupation. Providing new teachers with support and training will reduce the likelihood that teachers leave the classroom.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the research methodology used in this study, give insight to the researcher, identify the target population, restate the purpose of the research, discuss literature reviewed to support developed research questions, discuss data collection procedures, and explain how the data will be analyzed. This study's target population is secondary agricultural educators who have left teaching in the classroom between 2014 and 2019.

Methodology

A qualitative research approach was used during this research. Open-ended questions were used to allow the interviewees to share their stories. The purpose of this study was to examine the reasons Tennessee high school agricultural teachers left the classroom. A qualitative approach was the most appropriate choice to use. A grounded theory methodology was used. Open-ended interviews were used to allow the researcher to understand the whole participants' story. According to Johnson and Christensen (2017), concepts are generated from inductively collecting data. During this study, data was collected, and generalizations were made after analyzing the data.

The Researcher

The researcher worked in the agricultural education field for nine years and held a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science-Production Management and a Master of Science in Agriculture. No participant had a direct relationship with the researcher that represented a conflict of interest. The researcher has been educated and trained on the necessary skills to conduct the designed study. The researcher’s skills that were utilized during this project came

from participating in the Murray State University Graduate P-20 program. As a result, the researcher drew from prior knowledge and experiences when developing concepts about teacher attrition.

IRB Approval

Before the research collection could be started, the researcher had to fill out an application to the institutional research board (IRB). This study is classified as a level-one study. The IRB application and required paperwork stating the research's goal and plan was submitted to the IRB authority for approval. This material allows the IRB the ability to understand the scope and liability of the research. IRB approval is required before any data can be collected; this is critical in the research process. Once the application was approved, the IRB number 20-012 was issued to the study, and data collection began (Appendix G).

Interview Format

After receiving IRB approval, a list of teachers who left the profession was developed. Personal contacts of the researcher and members of the Tennessee Association of Agricultural Educators (TAAE) provided names and contact information for possible participants. An email was developed and sent to potential participants explaining the research's focus, that it was IRB approved, and the interview would not take any longer than 30 minutes (Appendix A). Those who responded that they were interested in the interview were provided the option for in-person or phone interviews. All participants opted for phone interviews. Interviewees were informed that a consent form must be signed before any interviews could occur (Appendix D). If the participants decided to conduct a phone interview, a consent form would be emailed. They were required to sign the consent form and send a scanned copy of the signed form to the researcher. After the researcher received the signed consent form, the participant was contacted, and an

interview time was scheduled. The consent forms were filled out before the interview started for the individuals who decided to participate in an in-person interview. Participants were informed and consented to the conversations being recorded.

The technology was used during the meetings to assist in data collection. At the beginning of the interview, a voice recorder was prepared to capture the participant and the researcher's conversation. The voice recorder operation was explained to each participant before the interview began. Once all parties were ready to initiate the conversation, the recorder was started, and the interviewing process began. The researcher began by asking questions that were pre-approved by the IRB (Appendix E). The questions were slowly read and repeated if needed. If the question was not understood, an example was given to improve the participant's understanding of the question. Once all the interview questions were asked, and the participant answered each one as they desired, the interview was concluded, and each participant was thanked for their time. The interviews conducted ran approximately 20 minutes in duration.

This research utilized interviews as the source of collecting data. Over the phone, interviews were used. Interview questions were developed to address all aspects of the three research objectives. Questions were designed to obtain the demographics of agricultural teachers in Tennessee who left the profession. One question, "How did you obtain your teaching certification?" addressed how the participants received their teaching certification, traditional versus non-traditional methods. Some interview questions, "Please describe the process you experienced when deciding on leaving the profession?" and "What are the factors that led to your final decision to leave the agricultural classroom?" were created to identify if a vertical move up in the career ladder was a reason for leaving the classroom, if leaving was beyond their control, or if it was their decision and why.

Target Population

The population selected for this study consisted of Tennessee agricultural educators who left the profession between 2014 and 2019. A list of teachers who left the profession was obtained from word of mouth conversations with current high school agricultural teachers, by contacting the Tennessee Association of Agricultural Educators, TAAE, and utilizing the social media platform, Facebook, to create a post asking for participants. Teachers who changed jobs but stayed in the agriculture classroom were removed from the population since they were still in the agricultural teaching profession or did not teach in Tennessee.

During the development of the purposive sample, 23 people were contacted to participate. The potential participants all taught agriculture education at the high school level at some point since 2011 but are no longer doing so. Of the 23 contacted, seven were identified as possible participants for this study due to their availability and willingness to participate.

Participant Identifier	Gender	Number of Years Taught	Type of Licensure	Marital Status While Teaching	Children Status While Teaching	Age When Started Teaching	Age When Left the Profession	Number of Agricultural Teachers in the Program	Teaching Experience of Co-Teachers
AT1	Female	6	Professional	Married	2 During	25	31	2	Veteran
AT2	Male	2	Traditional	Not Married	None	23	25	2	Novice
AT3	Male	3	Professional	Married	2	32	35	2	Novice
AT4	Female	5	Traditional	Married	2 During	22	27	1,3	Novice
AT5	Female	1	Traditional	Married	None	22	23	3	Veteran
AT6	Female	1	Traditional	Not married	None	22	23	3	Novice & Veteran
AT7	Female	4.5	Traditional	Married	None	22	27	1, 2,3	Novice & Veteran

Table 2. Demographic Summary of Study Participants (n=7). Veterans had at least five years of experience in teaching in an agriculture classroom.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to examine the reasons Tennessee public high school agricultural teachers left the classroom. This research focused on former high school agricultural teachers who left teaching to enter a new profession. Research questions were designed to assist

in determining the reasons for these teachers leaving. Teachers are leaving the classroom at high rates. Figure 2 displays the demand for Tennessee secondary agricultural teachers. In 2019, 20 teachers left a school-based agricultural education program, and 22 positions needed to be filled.

Secondary agricultural teacher retention is a concern for all high school programs. The growing world population, increasing demand for safer and better food and fiber production, and more families moving away from the farm have created a time where high school agricultural programs are critical for the future survival of agricultural practices.

Research Questions

The following were used for this study:

1. Describe the personal and professional characteristics of Tennessee agricultural teachers who decided to leave the secondary agricultural education profession.
2. Identify and describe the variables that impact the teachers' final decision to leave the profession.
3. Determine the relationship between the professional and personal characteristics, attrition variables.

As mentioned in Chapter II, mid-career agricultural teachers are the majority of females within 31-39 and obtained their teaching certifications through a traditional program (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). Research question one aims to identify if the same demographics hold high school agricultural teachers' personal and professional characteristics in Tennessee.

As mentioned in Chapter II, several factors were identified as reasons teachers left the classroom. These variables included teacher development; having an excellent, knowledgeable foundation for a teacher to enter the classroom is vital for retention (Duncan et al., 2013). The

research identified that having a supportive working environment with administrative, colleague, and family support is crucial to improve a teacher's feeling of belonging (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). Compensation and time requirements are also variables identified as reasons agricultural teachers considered leaving the profession (Boone & Boone, 2009). Research question two is designed to identify a correlation between factors found in the literature review and actual data from agricultural teachers in Tennessee.

Research question three is designed to identify a correlation between the data collected from research question one and research question two. The researcher wanted to see if a trend developed between demographics and possible reasons for leaving the classroom.

Validity and Reliability

Ethics remained a top priority during this study. To ensure validity and reliability during this study, the methods outlined in this chapter were followed. Consent forms were given and explained to each participant before the interviews were conducted, see Appendix D. At the beginning of the phone interviews, participants were reminded that the session was being recorded, and consent was received again. Two strategies used to promote qualitative research validity were the use of low-inference descriptors and multiple data sources. Teachers from different locations in Tennessee with different backgrounds were used during the interview. Johnson and Christensen (2017) described one way of implementing one data sources strategy by conducting multiple interviews using the same method. Low-inference descriptors were also used to allow readers to obtain a better experience of the interviews. Verbatim allows a reader to hear how participants feel about the issue. According to Johnson and Christensen (2017), verbatim provides an interpretation of what the participants feels and personal meaning.

One data source was used with multiple formats for triangulation to ensure qualitative rigor during the study. The data sources triangulated included: voice recording of the interviews, interview transcription, utilizing researcher field notes, using open-ended questions during the interview.

Procedures for data analysis

After all the interviews were conducted, the next step was to prepare the data for analysis. The researcher assigned a code to each participant. This code helped to maintain anonymity for everyone that was interviewed. The code consisted of the letters AT, which represented an agricultural teacher, and a numerical character. Everyone was assigned a unique number such as 1 or 2, depending on the order in which the interview took place. For example, quotes from the first agriculture teacher interviewed would be coded as (AT1).

The voice recording had to be transcribed to text format. All voice recordings were downloaded to a computer file. The recordings were labeled to match the coding (AT1). The researcher relistened to all the recorded interviews and transcribed the voice into a Microsoft Word document.

The coding of data allowed for ease in the analysis process. The researcher evaluated each interview to determine if a common trend was present in the participant's responses. The most common themes across the data were first evaluated. A word cloud program was used for this first analysis—a word cloud group with the same specialization. For example, the words in the larger text within the word cloud are more frequently used during the interview. These larger text words were evaluated and grouped into categories. Statements from the data collected were sorted into these categories. Then, the themes were developed from each category.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

All data collected for this qualitative study was conducted through one-on-one phone interviews. No participant wanted to conduct face-to-face interviews. The subjects' responses were recorded on a voice recorder and then transcribed by the researcher (Appendix F). The transcripts were then coded for analysis.

Objective 1 Themes

Objective one sought to describe Tennessee's agricultural teachers' demographic characteristics who have left the profession (Table 2). Two themes revealed that teachers who entered the classroom right after college did not stay over five years and that six out of seven teachers did not feel their teacher preparation courses prepared them for the challenges they faced in the classroom. Two teachers (AT1 and AT 3) had a job before teaching agriculture. AT1 taught high school biology and physical science for three years before coming into the agriculture classroom. AT3 worked in the agricultural production industry.

1.1 Teachers who enter the agricultural education profession right out of college did not stay in the profession for longer than five years. The first theme discusses the importance of having prior teaching experiences and an effective agricultural teacher preparation program and its impact on teacher attrition. A trend was identified by teachers who started in the agricultural classroom where in their early 20's, as their first job, they did not stay in the profession over five years. This data is shown in Table 2. Five teachers did not have any prior teaching experiences besides student teaching before obtaining a high school agricultural educator position. One teacher (AT1) had three years of prior teaching experience teaching high school biology and physical science. AT1 is still teaching basic high school sciences. AT3 worked in the agricultural industry before

entering the classroom and went back to the agricultural industry after leaving the education profession.

1.2 Teachers with traditional and professional licensure did not feel prepared for the classroom. The data collected did not seem to matter if the teacher obtained traditional or professional licensure on how prepared they felt for the classroom. When asking the question, "Do you feel your training prepared you for the classroom?" only one participant replied, "absolutely" (Interview 6, personal communication, July 23, 2020). The other six interviewees felt unprepared in some aspect of their job. Example of how participants felt unprepared are as follows:

- "I do not think Ag Ed teachers coming in with Ag Ed degree are as prepared" (Interview 1, personal communication, February 26, 2020).
- "Yes & no. Yes, the basic education classes helped to prepare me for lesson planning. It would be hard for someone who has not had those classes to jump right in. I knew the curriculum. However, we had to teach other classroom basics. If we did not know something, we would just have to figure it out. I felt disciplined in lesson planning & timeline to cover topics. I felt it was a sink or swim situation many times" (Interview 2, personal communication, February 27, 2020).
- "Coming from the production industry, I understood the business side and a lot of where the industry is going and where education was lacking. I did not feel prepared for lesson plans, so much fluff. My wife was a teacher, and that is where I obtained advice & knowledge of general teacher stuff" (Interview 3, personal communication, February 27, 2020).

- “I was not prepared for the challenges, like student behavior. Curriculum wise I was very prepared, but student management I was not” (Interview 4, personal communications, July 23, 2020).
- “No, I felt that being a state FFA officer prepared me more for the classroom, especially with people management. I was not held accountable for many things in my teacher preparation program. I struggled with the actual teaching of agriculture material. I did not feel adequate” (Interview 6, personal communication, July 23, 2020).
- “No. I believe my teacher education courses were sufficient, but my agriculture classes were not centered around teaching the content. I believe I would have benefited more from an agricultural education major, which was unavailable at my university at the time” (Interview 7, personal communication, October 8, 2020).

Objective 2 Themes

Objective two was designed to identify the reasons teachers left the agricultural classroom. To determine why these teachers left the profession, the interviewer asked the two following questions: “Please describe the process you experienced when deciding on leaving the profession?” and “What are the factors that led to your final decision to leave the agricultural classroom?” (Appendix E). The interviewees' responses were put into a word cloud generator (Figure 3).

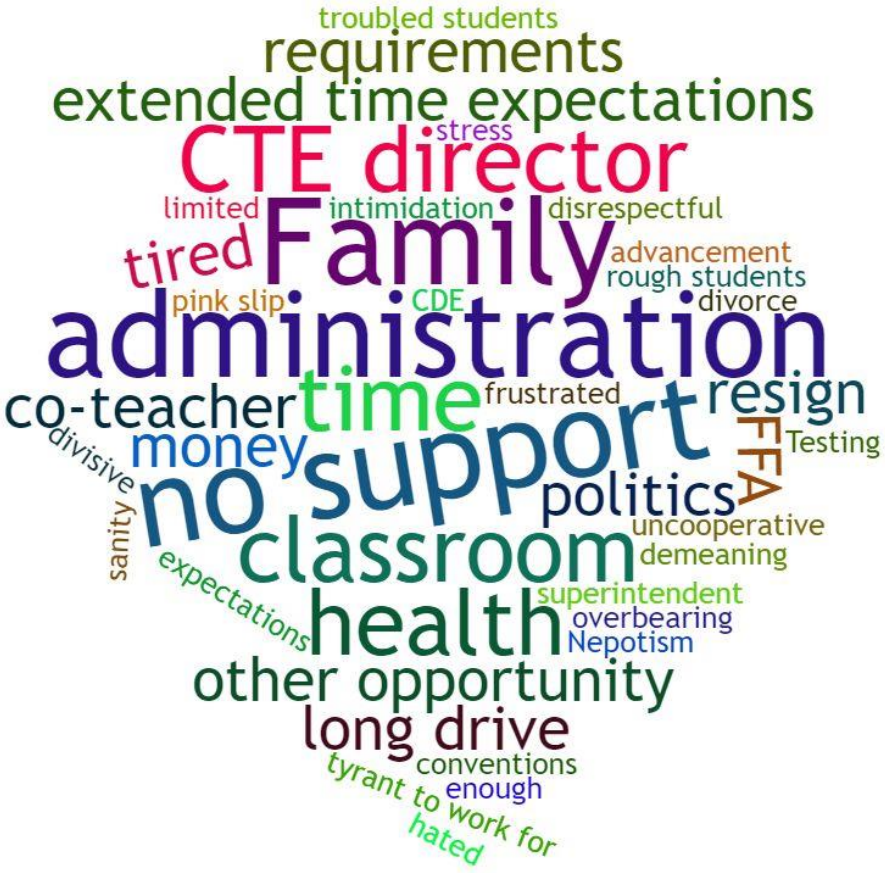

Figure 3. Word Cloud- Interview Questions 7 and 8- Please describe the process you experienced when deciding on leaving the profession? What are the factors that led to your final decision to leave the agricultural classroom?

The largest words in Figure 3 were the main reasons mentioned during the interviews as to why the former agriculture teachers left the classroom. *Family, administration, no support, time,* and *health* were the top words mentioned. These keywords were used to develop themes. The data were then grouped into four themes: *family, no support, time,* and *health*. Problems with the *administration* were combined with the *no support* theme. Statements from the interviews were then placed into the appropriate theme.

2.1 Agricultural teachers left the profession because they wanted to spend more time with their families. This category included statements from former teachers who left the classroom to spend more time with their family or because their job requirements prevented them from spending time with their family. Examples of statements coded as related to *family* are as follows:

- "I could not handle it. I was missing my kids growing up, the job caused my divorce, I was tired and frustrated all the time… Knew then it was time to leave" (Interview 3, personal communication, February 27, 2020).
- "It was what had to do at the time for my family" (Interview 4, personal communication, July 23, 2020).
- "It broke my heart to leave it, but with the politics of the education system, my mental health and family was more important." (Interview 1, personal communication, February 26, 2020).
- "I wanted more time with my family. So, I decided to be a stay at home mom" (Interview 4, personal communication, July 23, 2020).
- "We decided to manage our finances so that I could stay home with our child" (Interview 7, personal communication, October 8, 2020).

2.2 Agricultural teachers left the profession because they felt they had no support. These teachers expressed having no support from administration, CTE directors, superintendents, principals, and co-teachers. One former teacher mentioned not having support from their family. Family support was needed to watch their children so they could participate in after school required activities. "I had no personal family support to help with my kids when a job had so many time requirements" (Interview 3, personal

communication, February 27, 2020). The above statement also qualified for the *time* theme. Examples that support the *no support* theme are as follows:

- "During my ag teaching positions, I had no support from the administration" (Interview 1, personal communication, February 26, 2020).
- "I hated the school system, school, and some co-teachers. The CTE director was not supportive. I was just tired of teaching ag in general" (Interview 6, personal communication, July 23, 2020).
- "The current administration was not supportive of the ag program" (Interview 2, personal communication, February 27, 2020).
- "I felt I had zero backings of support" (Interview 3, February 27, 2020).
- "The principal was demeaning, overbearing, cold, and thrived on intimidation. An absolute tyrant to work under" (Interview 7, personal communication, October 8, 2020).
- "Other contributing factors [to leaving]… were an uncooperative and divisive co-teacher" (Interview 7, personal communication, October 8, 2020).

` **2.3 Agricultural teachers left the profession because of the time demands from the occupation.** Agricultural teachers are expected to manage an active FFA chapter. By doing so, they are often required to take students to competitions, organize after-school practices, attend conventions and other FFA events. These events occur throughout the year, even during the summer months. Some programs have greenhouses and farms to manage. These activities require many working hours outside the average classroom day.

This required time at work causes problems with raising their own families and other outside obligations. The following are examples of statements that fit into the *time* theme:

- "I had no personal family support to help with my own kids when the job had so many time requirements. They do not count what all ag teachers do outside of the class during the school year as extra time on a 12-month contract. I was gone all the time" (Interview 3, personal communication, February 27, 2020).
- "School I work at now is closer to home, no FFA requirements, not gone all the time…My former school did not recognize the time spent doing these things as extended" (Interview 1, personal communication, February 26, 2020).
- "I was driving 64 miles one way" (Interview 4, personal communication, July 23, 2020).

2.4 Agricultural teachers left the profession because of personal health issues from stressful work environments. The expectations of agricultural teachers are high. Time is required outside of the daily classroom, during holiday breaks, and during the summer. Agricultural teachers are required to teach classes outside their areas of expertise. The above, combined with poor administrative support and raising a family, can create personal health problems. The following are examples of teachers who experienced personal health issues while teaching in the agricultural classroom:

- AT7 stated that "…it [leaving] came as a matter of allowing myself to be healthy" (Interview 7, personal communication, October 8, 2020).

- Another interviewee (AT3) stated, “the stress of everything caused me to have a heart attack” (Interview 3, personal communication, February 27, 2020).
- “It broke my heart to leave it, but … my mental health and family was more important.” (Interview 1, personal communication, February 26, 2020).
- “I took a pay cut…but it was worth it, my sanity is so much better” (Interview 1, personal communication, February 26, 2020).

The following reasons for leaving did not fit into a theme identified. One participant’s (AT5) response did not fit into one of the themes identified because their contract was not renewed. AT1 left the first agricultural teaching position because they had obtained the second one and was given a pink slip for the second agricultural teaching position. AT7 left the first position because they obtained the second job and then left that position with their family.

Objective 3 Themes

The researcher used objective three to understand better if there were any relationships between teachers’ personal characteristics, professional characteristics, and the decision to leave the secondary agricultural education profession. Agricultural teachers enter the profession because they enjoy the subject matter. AT1 stated, “I loved sharing my love for agriculture” (Interview 1, personal communication, February 26, 2020). This response was expressed by all seven of the participants. The researcher observed four themes develop when evaluating their personal and professional characteristics. This passion and drive to educate about agriculture were not enough to keep them in the classroom.

3.1 An agricultural teachers’ love of agriculture and wanting to give back to the community is not enough to keep them in the profession. The interview question, “Why did you want to become an agriculture teacher?” looking into why the participants

went into the profession (Appendix F). Their responses were entered into a word cloud generator (Figure 4). The words that were mentioned the most are displayed in a larger font. The words mentioned least are in smaller font. The words mentioned the most was *FFA, high school, kids, agriculture,* and *teacher*. Other keywords mentioned were *experience, enjoyed, give, teach, passionate, state officer,* and *others.* From the data collected, it was evident that agriculture teachers go into the profession looking to make it a life-long career. They have positive experiences and happy memories of being in FFA in high school. They want to give back to others and enjoy teaching others. Teacher responses that displayed their passion for going into the agriculture education profession are as follows:

- "I love agriculture and sharing that with the kids. Most who have no agricultural experiences or background" (Interview 1, personal communication, February 26, 2020).
- "I had a fantastic high school ag teacher [who] influenced me as an individual. Made me a better person. Thought I wanted to do the same thing, impact others like my former ag teacher" (Interview 2, personal communication, February 27, 2020).
- "I felt I could make a difference, give these kids the experience of what I missed growing up in education/leadership" (Interview 3, personal communication, February 27, 2020).
- "Felt like what I was being called to do at that time… I wanted to give back to the community that gave me many opportunities" (Interview 4, personal communication, July 23, 2020).

- "I wanted to teach. Loved to teach. I wanted to put those two things [agriculture and teaching] together. Being an ag teacher was kinda natural due to my life experiences" (Interview 5, personal communication, July 23, 2020).
- "I liked FFA and had a strong high school FFA program" (Interview 6, personal communication, July 23, 2020).
- "I decided to become a teacher because I enjoy mentoring young people" (Interview 7, personal communication, October 8, 2020).

Figure 4. Word Cloud- Interview Question 3-Why did you want to be an agricultural teacher?

3.2 There is an impact on retention rates when having a veteran co-teacher in your agricultural program and high teacher turn over. Interviewees were to describe their

program where they taught (Appendix E). Four mentioned working with a veteran teacher at some point in their career. For this research, a veteran teacher has had at least five years of experience teaching agriculture in the classroom. Five former teachers mentioned working with a novice teacher at some point during their time in the classroom. This question was asked to see what the effects of a co-teacher are on attrition rates. Teacher turnover can cause problems within an agricultural program. All seven mentioned some form of teacher turnover during their time in the classroom. The following are the responses from interviews that relate to teacher turnover:

- "I started with a veteran teacher, who left after the first year, then we went to a single teacher program after that" (Interview 1, personal communication, February 26, 2020).
- "There was a large turnover of teachers before I started. I worked with another novice teacher who had two years of experience before me" (Interview 2, February 27, 2020).
- "My co-teacher was fresh out of college" (Interview 3, personal communication, February 27, 2020).
- "At the first school, I was the only teacher. The second school…we started with two teachers, and there were three when I left" (Interview 4, personal communication, July 23, 2020).
- "The school had a high teacher turnover when I was hired. They had five different teachers within the past four years before I was hired" (Interview 5, personal communication, July 23, 2020).

- "I student taught at the school I was hired, and they created a position for me… I worked with one veteran teacher and another fairly new teacher" (Interview 6, personal communication, July 23, 2020).
- "My first year, I taught with a veteran who had 25 plus years of experience. In the second year, the program was cut to one teacher. My next two years were at a different school, and I worked with a veteran and novice teacher" (Interview 7, personal communication, October 8, 2020).

3.3 Former agricultural teachers still feel very strongly about the future of agricultural education. Even though these participants may not be in the agricultural classroom, they are very passionate about the profession and the future. During the interview, they were asked, "Would you ever consider going back into teaching agriculture?" (Appendix E). Four of the seven participants said that they would go back to teaching agriculture at some point. Three participants said they would not go back to a high school classroom to teach agriculture. AT3 stated, "I still love to teach, and I love agriculture…But I would never go back to the agricultural classroom. It takes a team to be an ag teacher" (Interview 3, personal communication, February 27, 2020). AT4 stated they did not have the time to commit to it. AT6 would not teach high school but would teach agriculture at the college level. AT6 stated that "I do not want to feel like I am tied to my job. Job is a job, and home is home" (Interview 6, personal communication, July 23, 2020). The following statements are from those interviewees who would go back to the agricultural classroom:

- "I would consider going back to teach ag, but not be an FFA advisor" (Interview 1, personal communication, February 26, 2020).

- “I would not rule it out…I loved the school system I worked for and do not think I would have left if would have been in a growing program with a well-experienced mentor” (Interview 2, personal communication, February 27, 2020).
- “Yes, if a position came available where I live” (Interview 5, personal communication, July 23, 2020).
- “I would consider reentering the classroom, but it would depend on so many factors such as school system, administration, school, co-teachers, etc.” (Interview 7, personal communication, October 8, 2020).

3.4 The positive experiences while teaching secondary agriculture is not enough to keep teachers in the classroom. The question was asked for former teachers to share their experiences while in a secondary agricultural program (Appendix E). The researcher wanted to understand better the good and bad aspects experienced by these teachers. Agriculture teachers often build strong relationships with their students. AT6 stated that “I made life-long friends with my students” (Interview 6, personal communication, July 23, 2020). All seven participants mentioned that the benefit of teaching agriculture was the relationships with their students. The following are examples that support this theme:

- **“**The relationships with my kids are what I miss the most. I am still in contact with many of my former students” (Interview 1, personal communication, February 26, 2020).
- “One thing I loved was watching my students progress and learn… It was very rewarding” (Interview 2, personal communication, February 27, 2020).

- “The greatest moment is seeing the kids when they ‘get-it’ put things together and understand the ‘why,’ seeing the kids ‘click’ and still having great relationships with former students” (Interview 3, personal communication, February 27, 2020).

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to identify the reasons Tennessee high school agricultural teachers left the profession. The data collected showed that many agricultural teachers started teaching early in their professional careers and did not stay in the agricultural classroom for very long. Agricultural teacher attrition is an issue nationally and within the state of Tennessee. This study provided insight into why teachers entered their profession and why they are no longer in the agricultural classroom.

Most went into the agricultural education career because they were involved in agriculture during their youth. They felt the need to give back to the community. Participants had vital high school agricultural programs and influential teachers. Some participants were state FFA officers and loved FFA in high school. They wanted their students to have the same experiences that they had during high school.

The teachers reported some positive experiences during their classroom time. These individuals enjoyed the subject matter they were teaching. The time spent with their students in the classroom and on FFA trips created life-long friendships that still exist years after they have left the classroom. Being able to inspire youth to pursue a career in agriculture was self-rewarding. Agricultural teachers can satisfy their competitive edge through FFA competitions. The flexibility within the classroom and teaching ‘hands-on’ were positive aspects of being an agricultural teacher.

The negative experiences were consistent among most participants. Many teachers felt they did not have administrative support. Problems with the school board, principals, CTE

directors, and superintendents were all factors that were considered to leave the classroom. Having appropriate administrative support is critical in retaining agricultural teachers.

Many agricultural programs had become the ‘dumping ground’ for troubled students or students just expecting to receive a good grade. These students who did not want to learn about agriculture became a classroom disturbance and problem. Funding created limitations to what teachers and programs could do. Active FFA programs demand a lot outside the classroom time from the teacher. Many teachers found it hard to balance, starting a family, and keeping up with work demands.

Teachers felt that their teacher preparation courses did not prepare them for the classroom. Many had difficulty with basic teacher requirements of lesson planning, classroom management, and working with other teachers. The time these former teachers had spent in the classroom during student teaching was unrealistic to what they experienced during their first teaching position.

The former teachers who had vital high school agricultural programs, with veteran teachers, found themselves frustrated when they could not accomplish their expectations to recreate those programs at their schools. Observing other agricultural programs grow and thrive while their own struggled to survive only added to the feeling of disheartening.

Limitations

There are limitations to this study of former Tennessee secondary agriculture teachers that primarily result from the small sample size (n=7) and the nature of the sample being collected from Tennessee's only state. The small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings for this research. The study used only one mode of communication. Over-the-phone interviews were conducted to collect data.

This study was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic had just become an issue when the data collection process of this study started. In the beginning, there were numerous people interested in participating. But, as time progressed and the pandemic's uncertainty continued, people were less willing to participate. The researcher believes that if this study was conducted during a less stressful time, more former agriculture teachers would be willing to participate. The pandemic also prevented former agriculture teachers from participating in face-to-face interviews. Not observing each participants' facial expressions and body language during an interview creates a limitation to getting the whole experience.

The researcher recommends that this study be continued on a larger scale using various states to better examine similarities and differences. When writing up the future of agriculture teachers in secondary education study, there were delimitations into the research. This study could not address everything associated with secondary agriculture teacher retention and attrition. This study did not focus on the impact of having an experienced co-teacher or another veteran mentor. This study did not evaluate what former agriculture teachers learned while in their teacher preparation courses. This research sought to describe the overall experiences these former agriculture teachers had while in a high school classroom. Both positive and negative experiences were presented for this study.

Implications

In conclusion, the researcher found that despite the former teachers' passion for spreading their love for agriculture, it was not enough to keep them in the classroom. From learning about each teacher's story and understanding why they left the profession; agricultural education teacher preparation programs must prepare the teacher for a prolonged stay. Evaluating the expectations of new teachers entering the classroom, teaching them how to

prioritize and balance family time and work, and better preparing them for classroom management diversity are critical factors in developing a prepared teacher.

P-20 Implications

A goal of the P-20 program is to allow the educator to evaluate themselves to grow as an educational and community leader. If agricultural education teacher preparation courses were evaluated and implemented a P-20 approach, it would help develop these young teachers into lifelong agricultural educators. An effective teacher-leader in today's fast-paced classroom has to be capable of setting goals and transforming their actions to accomplish them. Educational leaders are responsible for creating future generations of leaders. Teacher-leaders are respected more when they are viewed as being authentic in nature. Successful leaders are multi-frame in their thinking.

As explained by Bolman and Deal (2014), a frame is a collection of beliefs and assumptions that a person carries with them that helps them understand and negotiate the world. The paths of life are not always clear. Frames can open up more options and allow a person to make better decisions. (p.11) Many agriculture teachers find it challenging to live in the grey area. Teachers are more secure knowing what steps need to be taken, seeing the appropriate answer for a situation, and understanding their expectations.

Frames are not set in stone. Frames can be changed during the reframing process. Reframing is discussed by Bolman and Deal (2014) to shift or change frames depending on the circumstances at that moment (p.13). Situations in life can make a person re-evaluate their way of thinking. Reflection is required to completely understand life's lessons (p.12). P-20 agricultural teacher-leaders need the ability to reflect on their accomplishments as an educator,

themselves as an FFA mentor, importance as a school employee, and as a critical foundation to their family.

An agriculture teacher needs to believe in their abilities and that what they are doing is important and making a difference. Beliefs are explained by Cashman (2008) as the ability to create our reality. Beliefs help teachers to interpret the world around them. Beliefs can either open their eyes to new horizons or dim to limit the possibilities. Life experiences can alter beliefs. Most former teachers who participated in the study have experienced life situations that made them stop and evaluate what is important to them. At that moment, they questioned if their career was best for them and their families. Utilizing this time to reflect and make changes are characteristics of a transformational leader. P-20 leaders are transformational leaders. Developing teacher-leader preparation courses that implement the P-20 concepts will help create mentors that can better assist new agriculture teachers entering the profession.

A P-20 teacher-leader will need to ability to create change. Teaching in a diverse and quickly changing world can cause extreme stress, even to a veteran teacher. Change creates anxiety amongst followers. Teacher-leaders are expected to reduce anxiety. A P-20 teacher-leader needs to be flexible and be self-aware of their personal beliefs. Some beliefs prevent change. Most teachers are afraid of failure. This fear can prevent them from attempting new ideas and challenges. As these teachers develop into better P-20 leaders, they will reduce their tendencies to avoid failure and learn to accept it. Failure is not the end as long as you learn from it.

P-20 teacher-leaders are motivated to teach students how to learn, not what to learn. An effective teacher-leader's thinking needs to be equal to or greater than the complexity of the environment. The world we live in today is interdependent. What happens overseas today can

impact what happens locally tomorrow. Complexity is overwhelming at times. Successful teacher-leaders need the ability to cope. Understanding today's diverse teaching environment will help with decreasing some of the stress.

Evaluating teacher preparation courses and creating new teacher mentor programs using the P-20 philosophy can help develop agriculture teachers involved in the secondary agriculture classroom for their entire career. Agriculture teachers are very passionate about their job. But when faced with all the obstacles of today's classroom, they often see no solution and leave the profession. Growing as a P-20 educator, they can better understand how to reflect, their teaching style, how to be a better leader, and how to adapt. Implementing P-20 into teacher preparation courses can help close the gap between agriculture teachers leaving the profession too soon and encouraging new agriculture teachers to want to enter the career.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the data collected from this study, there are several areas for future research. All participants mentioned having co-teachers to work with during their years of teaching agriculture. Some co-teachers were veterans, having five or more years of experience, while others were fresh out of college. This study did not investigate the impact these co-teachers had on the retention rates of the former teachers. A study of the impact of having a veteran teacher mentor the new teacher would help develop a new-teacher mentor program for those entering the agricultural education profession.

Another area of research is by examining the administrational expectations of agricultural programs. Many participants mentioned the problems with different levels of administration as a factor of leaving the profession. Understanding what is expected from the program and the new agricultural teacher would better prepare the new teachers when applying and entering a new

school system. Teacher preparation courses can aim at educating new teachers on how to deal with administrative problems.

More research is needed to gain a better understanding of this issue. Reaching more teachers across the state, especially those who have taught in East Tennessee, would allow for a more state-wide image of what is causing teachers to leave the agricultural classroom. Although the invitation to participate in this study was open statewide, there were not many participants from East Tennessee. Taking the foundation of this research and applying a quantitative data collection, like using a survey, may allow the researcher to reach more people and better understand this issue within the state.

Recommendations for Practice

The following are recommendations for keeping agricultural teachers in the classroom. These recommendations were derived after a review of literature and interviews with former agricultural teachers. The researcher recommends providing new opportunities for support and professional development to learn how to balance managing an FFA chapter, implementing standard teacher requirements, and providing an engaging agriculture curriculum (McKim et al., 2017). Participants in this study mentioned difficulties with lesson planning, classroom management, maintaining an active FFA chapter, and meeting other expectations. Modifying professional development that can specifically address these issues would be beneficial in eliminating stress.

Five out of seven of the teachers in this study were females. This finding is a change in demographics for agriculture teachers supporting the literature (Sorensen & McKim, 2014). Young female teachers find it hard to keep up with the demands from work and starting a family. Four out of seven participants mentioned the importance of family as a factor when deciding to

leave. Murray et al. (2011) suggest providing time management workshops as part of in-service training. Finding ways to balance starting a family and work demands can help reduce stress and improve retention rates.

Placing these young female teachers with supportive co-teachers and or a veteran mentor could help them grow as educators. Solomonson and Retallick recommend developing state-level professional development that is purposeful and addresses the changing family dynamics issues. Crutchfield et al. (2013) recommend making state agricultural agencies and secondary school administrators aware of the conflict that arises when work interferes with family life. Crutchfield et al. (2013) also mention the importance of improving professional development to implement strategies to create a work-life balance. This new balance can assist in re-engaging current teachers in the agriculture education profession.

Improving professional development and in-service training to address the issues found in this research can improve agriculture teacher retention. Solomonson et al. (2018) recommend improving teacher preparation programs to improve the teacher's confidence in teaching the curriculum. Elliott et al. (2017) recommend creating professional development that includes instructional training on modifying lessons when working with special needs students. Learning how to teach a diverse student body can improve a teacher's confidence.

Lemons et al. (2015) suggest redesigning teacher preparation courses to provide a supportive network of people who can assist these new teachers in their profession. The study also mentioned the importance of a structured teacher mentor program to help novice teachers become more acclimated to the agriculture education profession. Hasselquist et al. (2017) mention the importance of having a mentoring program that focuses on building positive

relationships with administrators and colleagues. Developing these positive relationships early on can help prevent or work through problems that may arise later in their career.

Crutchfield et al. (2013) suggested developing mentoring programs that allow teachers to share their strategies and coping skills. This will allow teachers to not feel alone in their struggles and gain hope of creating balance and reengaging their passion for the profession. Elliott et al. (2017) recommend designing a program that teaches new teachers strategies to feel more competent in building relationships with co-workers and administration. These relationships are vital in a new teacher becoming more socially integrated within their school building. This feeling will make teachers feel more like the school family and less likely to want to leave.

Gaining support from professional agricultural organizations is a critical step in making required changes to the profession. Opening conversation with vested stakeholders is vital in sustaining the future trajectory of the agriculture education profession (Solomonson et al., 2018). Agricultural leaders should be at the forefront of requesting research in teacher retention areas (Crutchfield et al., 2013). Murray et al. (2011) suggest that state and regional agricultural leaders should develop a message to all teachers about the importance of balancing career and family. This message could help decrease the feeling of being overburdened by the pressure state and regional agricultural leaders put on current high school teachers.

Stakeholders are important in closing the gap between secondary agriculture teacher retention and attrition. According to the National Association of Agricultural Educators (2014), programs like the National Teach Ag Campaign's State Teach Ag Results (STAR) program are important in keeping agriculture teachers in the profession. The State Teach Ag Results program helps individual states develop an effective recruitment plan and improve retention strategies to

address the state's teacher shortage. Tennessee currently utilizes this program. Improving awareness and the importance of programs like STAR can assist in the dilemma of teacher shortages. Programs like this can also include a component that focuses on providing opportunities to reach former agriculture teachers in hopes of bringing them back to the classroom (Solomonson et al., 2018).

Solomonson and Retallick (2018) mention the importance of state and national agriculture leaders in evaluating all the additional expectations required for secondary agriculture teachers. These additional expectations of paperwork, deadlines, working extra days, etc., can be overbearing and lead to high-stress levels. Their study recommends consolidating activities and events so that teachers are not gone as often. A study conducted by Solomonson et al. (2018) supports the idea of agricultural education state staff, CTE directors, and school administrators making a conscious attempt to decrease these additional expectations or provide current teachers with more help and resources allow them to manage their excessive workload. By consolidating activities and events and looking into additional expectations can help reduce stress and improve retention rates.

Problems with administration, expected time requirements, and lack of support were all factors that the individuals in this study mentioned as a factor when deciding to leave. Solomonson and Retallick (2018) stressed the importance of having administrative and stakeholder support reduce the likelihood of a teacher leaving the classroom. This same study found that teachers want their devoted time back for their efforts. Being an agriculture teacher requires the dedication of many outside hours, beyond the typical workday. Developing a beginner's guide or re-evaluating an agricultural program’s expectations may guide these new teachers in decision making. Solomonson et al. (2018) suggests creating more multi-teacher

agriculture departments or hiring an assistant to help with FFA requirements. Murray et al. (2011) recommend creating part-time positions that would provide teachers who want to leave the profession another option before completing the agriculture education profession. These additional staff positions can help divide the workload and help reduce stress levels and improve teacher retention.

Solomonson and Retallick (2018) recommend developing recognition programs focused on teachers for their hard work and dedication at regional and state levels. These recognition programs will improve a teacher's feeling of appreciation and help build a supportive relationship with their administration. This adequate appreciation from a local level may be enough to keep the teacher in the profession longer. The study by Solomonson and Retallick (2018) also suggests developing regional and state programs that allow administrators to showcase opportunities students gain by being involved in secondary high school agriculture and FFA programs.

The above are practice recommendations to improve the retention rates of high school agriculture teachers enter the profession due to their love for the subject area. Solomonson and Retallick (2018) believe that this passion for their programs and agricultural education's future stems from their non-monetary investment into their programs. With the high expectations, expected time, and lack of support, many do not stay in the profession for over five years. Hopefully, with more research into this dilemma and improving teacher training, and providing mechanisms for support, we can reduce the number of teachers who leave the classroom and improve the numbers of those entering the career.

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Appendix A

Email to all Tennessee FFA Chapters

Hello Fellow Ag Educators,

As I can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel in my doctoral program, I'm needing your assistance in completing the last leg of this journey. I need participants for my dissertation research. The topic is Agricultural Teacher Retention. I need former ag educators who are willing to participate in a phone interview.

I am looking for people who have taught, or student taught in a high school agricultural program but no longer taught agriculture. These individuals can still be teaching in another subject area or working in an industrial setting. If you know of anyone who fits this description and would be willing to answer a few questions, please pass this along.

I can be reached by email (kfloyd4@murraystate.edu) or my cell (731-441-2541). I need representatives from all regions in TN.

Thank you all so much for everything you do advocate agriculture and impacting our future,

Keasha Floyd

Appendix B

Message posted on Personal and TAAE Facebook Page

Attention Ag Teachers & People with an Ag Ed degree. I am trying to finish up my doctorate program and working on my dissertation. My topic is over Agriculture Teacher Retention. I am looking to interview those who have either taught a year in an ag classroom OR student taught in an ag classroom AND no longer teach in the field of agriculture. If you are willing to participate in an interview or know someone who fits this description, please let me know. Thank you in advance.

Keasha Floyd

Appendix C

Participant Invitation Letter

Participant Invitation Letter

You are invited to participate in a research study on identifying factors as to why agricultural teachers are leaving the agricultural classroom for other professions. The purpose of this study is to get participants who have taught or student-taught in an agricultural classroom. During an interview, you will be asked to answer some questions and reflect on your experiences as an agricultural teacher. Your participation will take approximately 1 hour. There are no known risks associated with this study. We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this study. However, the agricultural educational field may benefit from what we learn through this study. You will receive no payment for your participation. If you are interested in participating, please respond to this email and contact Keasha Floyd at 731-441-2541, kfloyd4@murraystate.edu.

Thank you for your time,

Keasha Floyd

Graduate Student at Murray State University

Appendix D

Interview Consent Form

MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY

Opportunity *afforded*

Research Participation Consent Form

Study Title: Factors to Leave: Teacher Retention in Secondary Agricultural Education
Primary Investigator: Keasha Floyd and Dr. Brian Parr, Agriculture
Faculty Sponsor Contact: Dr. Brian Parr, 270-809-2966, bparr@murraystate.edu

You are being invited to participate in a research study conducted through Murray State University. This form contains information you will need to help you decide whether to be in this research study or not. Participants are above the age of 18. Please read the form carefully and ask the study team member(s) questions about anything that is not clear. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

1. **Nature and Purpose of Project:** This study aims to identify factors as to why agricultural teachers are leaving the agricultural classroom for other professions. This study requires participants who have taught or student-taught in an agricultural classroom for at least one year.

2. **Participant Selection:** You are being asked to participate because you have taught/student-taught at least one year in an agricultural classroom and are no longer teaching in an agricultural classroom.

3. **Explanation of Procedures:** By participating in this activity, you will be a part of a graduate student's research in the P-20 Agricultural Education Program.
   The study activities include in-person or over-the-phone interviews. As a participant, you will be asked to answer questions and reflect on your experiences as an agriculture teacher.
   Study duration: Your participation will take approximately 1 hour.

4. **Recordings/Photographs:** Interviews will be audiotaped recorded. A handheld voice recorder will be used during the interviewing process. Phone conversations will be voice recorded for phone interviews. Audiotape recordings will allow the researcher to collect the data from the interviews better. Being recorded is required for this research. If you do not want to be recorded, please do not enroll in this study. Please initial your decision below.

   _____ I agree to be audiotaped during the interview.

Initials

_____ I disagree to be audiotaped during the interview.
Initials

5. **Discomforts and Risks:** There are no anticipated risks and discomforts for participants.

6. **Benefits:** We do not know if you will benefit from being in this study. This study is not designed to benefit you directly. However, your participation may help to increase our understanding of why agricultural teachers are leaving the profession.

7. **Confidentiality:** Your identity will be known to the researchers, but the information you provide will be kept confidential.

8. **Refusal/Withdrawal:** Your participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw/stop participating at any time with absolutely no penalty. While study participation is voluntary, all questions must be answered in order for their responses to be included in the study results.

9. **Contact Information:** Any questions about the procedures or conduct of this research should be brought to the attention of Dr. Brain Parr at 270-809-2966 or bparr@murraystate.edu. If you would like to know the results of this study, please contact Dr. Brian Parr.

Your response submission indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered and that you agree to take part in this study.

This document's dated approval stamp indicates that this project has been reviewed and approved by the Murray State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the MSU IRB Coordinator at (270) 809-2916 or msu.irb@murraystate.edu.

Participant's Name (printed): _____

_____ _____
(Signature of Participant) (Date)

_____ _____
(Signature of Person Obtaining Consent) (Date)

MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY
Institutional Review Board
Approved: 1/28/20 Expires: 1/27/21

Appendix E

IRB Approved Interview Questions

MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY

Opportunity *afforded*

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself. Ex: your age, gender, race, marital status, and family size?
2. How long were you in the classroom teaching agriculture?
3. Was agricultural education your original career path?
4. How did you obtain your teaching certification?
5. Do you feel that your path of certification better prepared you for the classroom?
6. Tell me about your experiences as an agricultural educator?
7. Please describe the process you experienced when deciding on leaving the profession?
8. What are the factors that led to your final decision to leave the agricultural classroom?
9. Would you ever consider going back into teaching agriculture?
10. What suggestions/recommendations do you have for current ag-ed leaders and teachers on preventing teachers from leaving the agricultural classroom?

Follow-up questions will be asked to gain information further and encourage conversation during the interview.

Appendix F

Interview Responses Grouped by Question

Question 1: Demographics

AT1: 35 years old now, taught when I was 25, female, married, two kids ages 6 and 4

AT2: male, 23, unmarried, no kids

AT3: male, 39- divorced, two kids

AT4: Female, two married, two children

AT5: female, 22, married, no kids

AT6: female, 22, unmarried, no kids

AT7: female, 22, married, no kids

Question 2: How long did you teach AG Ed?

AT1: 5 years

AT2: 2 years

AT3: 3 years

AT4: 5 years

AT5: 1 year

AT6: 1 year

AT7: 4.5 years

2.a: What was your program like?

AT1: 2 teachers (me and a veteran) –he left after my first year, went to a single teacher program

AT2: turnover of teachers- did not have an established program. Worked with another new teacher (she had two years experience when he started)

AT3: 2 teachers – other was fresh out of college

AT4: first school- single teacher, second school- started with two teachers, 3 when she left

AT5: high teacher turn over when hired. Three teacher program,

AT6: originally at two teacher-student taught at the school-they created the position for her- 3 teachers (1 veteran teacher, another reasonably new teacher)

AT7: 1st year- taught with a veteran (25+ years) teacher, 2nd year- cut to one teacher, third year- different school-taught with a veteran (8 years), and a novice (2 years) teachers, fourth year-2 novice teachers. Half a year-one novice and one brand new teacher.

3. Was AG ED an original career path? If not, how did you get into AGED?

AT1: not original career path- vet. Teaching biology at HS- took praxis- certification

AT2: Yes

AT3: no- general Ag business degree UTM, worked industry before in warehouse employee and operational manager, the school called and asked if he wanted the position because current ag teacher left (word of mouth) community guy- small town- knew the information

AT4: yes- UTM

AT5: yes, absolutely

AT6: yes- UTM

AT7: Yes

3.A: Why did you want to be an AG teacher?

AT1: It was where my heart is. “I love agriculture and sharing that with the kids. Most who have no agricultural experiences or background.” I was raised around animals and farming and very passionate about it. I was in FFA in high school.

AT2: I had a fantastic high school ag teacher- influenced me as an individual. Made me a better person. I thought I wanted to do the same thing, impact others like my former ag teacher.

AT3: I had an HS ag teacher, and she influenced me in animal science (my weaker area). My kids were in school, and I wanted to share that with them and spend more time with them. I felt I could make a difference, give these kids the experience of what I missed growing up in education/leadership. In my personal high school FFA experience, I saw kids whom others have looked over (not who is who) excel. I enjoyed and wanted to promote public speaking,

AT4: I was an FFA state officer. “Felt like what I was being called to do at that time” “Wanted to give back to the community that gave me a lot of opportunities” Active FFA program in HS

AT5: My dad was a farmer, grew up in an agricultural environment. I wanted to teach “loved to teach.” I wanted to put those two things [agriculture and teaching] together. Being an ag teacher was somewhat natural due to my life experiences.

AT6: I really liked FFA and had a strong high school FFA program. I was a state FFA officer.

AT7: To be honest, I took agriculture in high school to hang out with my boyfriend (now husband). I really enjoyed my classes and really got into soil science. Rather than going into a soil science degree, I decided to become a teacher because I enjoy mentoring young people.

4: How did you obtain teaching certification

AT1: MS (Animal Science) – HS Biology (highly qualified-3 years) - Praxis- Certification (UTM transition to the teaching program,

AT2: traditional

AT3: non-tradition: 2 years with transitional license, took night classes- Praxis passed the fir[st] time

AT4: UTM aged teacher

AT5: MSU with BS in ag science with a focus on AGED

AT6: UTM

AT7: MTSU- BS in Agribusiness and certification in secondary education

5: Did the certification path prepare you for the classroom?

AT1: did not have ag mech class, FFA side experience (FFA private experience-Good Ol boys club) Ag Ed kids not receptive of rigor coming from biology teacher- ag kids had been through multiple teachers before her. Don't think aged teachers coming in with AG Ed degree are as prepared. COMP (Bellmont /Vanderbilt program?) program- prepared her more for teaching. Masters program a joke, no stronger of a teacher, did learn more about herself & how unhappy she was doing what she was- reflection based program.

AT2: yes & no- Yes: basic ed classes helped to prep for lesson planning. Be hard for someone who hasn't had those classes to jump right in. know the curriculum we have to teach but another classroom "basics" we have to figure it out. Disciplined in lesson planning & timeline to cover topics- sink or swim

AT3: see the business side and where a lot of where the industry is going and where education was lacking. Not prepared for lesson plans- so much fluff. The wife was a teacher- had advice & knowledge of general teacher stuff

AT4: wasn't prepared for the challenges: student behavior. "Curriculum wise I was very prepared, but student management I was not." Would have been more support in a position with an established ag teacher.

AT5: absolutely

AT6: No- felt that being a State FFA Officer prepared her more for the classroom/people management, UTM-wasn't held accountable for a lot of things, struggled with the actual teaching of ag material, "didn't feel adequate."

AT7: No. I believe my teacher education courses were sufficient, but my agriculture classes weren't centered around teaching the content. I believe I would have benefited more from an agricultural education major, which was unavailable at my university at the time.

6: Experiences as an AG educator, Pros & Cons?

AT1: relationship with kids what misses most-still in contact with former students, sharing a love for ag. Politics of system, bad CTE director- wanted the job for the family, while there went through 5 CTE directors & 5 superintendents, principal-stayed the same-demoted the year after she left.

At E School- kids did not accept change & went to old Ag teacher (at county school still in system promoted to CTE director) kids didn't respect her- at convention kids stayed in the other hotel w old ag teacher. Met with principal & parents of kids- kid's parent said she would not have a job the next year (a big name in the county) E School- 4 Ag teachers since she left three years ago. "Good old boy system" NO planning period one year because she didn't want to lose one of the classes- cut other teachers. Bent over backward for the program- no respect

AT2: pros- kids, watch them progress & learn, self-rewarding, have freedom as a teacher to contests, travel, competitiveness (sports background). Being hands-on in the shop, teach plant & animals, touch, dig in the dirt, expose kids to things they have never been exposed to

Cons- didn't fund ag program- limited on things they wanted to do. Administration, non-supportive-

AT3: the most incredible education kids can get a two teacher program with a male & female teacher- the way the genders see things- some of the best public speaking & life lessons come from a female Ag teacher. Working with an ag teacher strong in different areas than yourself allows you to learn and become a better person—respect for each other. So much to do and did not know the proper way to do it without making admin mad, work-time demand wanted to be treated like he deserved to be there- put time & effort to get where he was like other subject teachers, spent $1000 a month on students because they could not afford it. The central office wanted you to teach "theory" than to do it hands-on. Taught welding after school to kids and rented gas- paid for himself- taught ag mechanics. A tangible-minded guy wanted to teach kids real-life hands-on. Schools believe cheaper to teach theory. Cell-phone issues. Issues with kids that teachers should not have to deal with. I wanted to teach real-working skills. The most extraordinary moment is seeing kids when they "get it" put things together and understand the "why." Seeing the kids "click" still has a great relationship with former students. I loved teaching real-world lessons. Kids have zero social skills

Cons: time constraints- expect to work magic and not appreciated, no funding, no backing, trips are seen as "always leaving work" and not working, no support from office: principal support, CTE director did not support- wasn't asking her every move and caused friction-micromanage and take credit for success, CTE director-had to get permission from, had community and parental support. FFA trying to do to much-expecting to much out of teachers (points based). Don't see a program's "worth", just

numbers. FFA is like college sports, taking the fun out of it. Can't compete with robust programs, not placing is discouraging to kids and teacher. Good ol' boy system changing grades for sure students- kid refused to take final- parent told teacher what to do. Kid told teacher what to do- admin supported kid (family funded school)

AT4: administrative support: 1st school- maybe, 2nd school- yes: Student behavior- 1st school- rough (tazed and meth bust) 2nd school- loved it (teachers and kids), but the drive was to long Expectations- 1st school- finish concentrators. 2nd school- super supportive

AT5: superintend wanted to tear the program down, high teacher turnover, parents were supportive, program had become a "dumping ground" 2/3 of students had IEPs, was the "Easy A" class,

Pros: the reward I got afterwards- formers students still contact and knowing that you impacted their lives, being an impact in the FFA and 4H programs. Relationship with the kids and students

Con- was not given any reason to why contract was not renewed, not getting support from superintendent, board of education, and principal.

AT6: Pros- go a lot of neat places, the kids, made life-long friends with students, comradery between ag teachers, everybody is willing to help, be part of learning the business side of ag ed, working with the veteran teacher

Con- extremely difficult- never home, due to the long drive, kids had jobs and wouldn't dedicate time to making the program better. Trouble with co-teacher, administrative support as long as principle looked good. Hour drive to and from work

AT7: Pros- opportunity to mentor youth, freedom in creating your own curriculum, travel opportunities with FFA, school calendar/hours, community with other ag teachers.

Cons- potential to work yourself to death depending on how many courses you are teaching and how many FFA events or contests you are coaching. “Family/work life balance is of utmost importance to my husband and I.” A couple of my previous co-teachers didn’t have the same mindset, which is sufficient for them because not everyone is the same, but it became an issue between me and them because I didn’t want to spend several hours after school every day working on FFA events. Additionally, there seems to be pressure from ag teachers at other schools to do the same. There’s a lot of liability involved from driving students, overnight trips, etc.

7: Deciding to leave process?

AT1: I left my first teaching position because my second called asking if I wanted the job. At my second ag teaching position, I was given a pink slip & told they no longer need my service. I didn’t want to drive to obtain another ag ed job, so I took pay cut from extended contract. But was worth it- my sanity is so much better. During my ag teaching positions, I had no support from administration. CTE director had no prior experiences in that position.

AT2: I remembered a past internship experience while in college and the freedom I had during that job. So, after my 1st year teaching, I started wanting to leave. I honored my contract but didn’t renew after 2nd year. I told principal during 2nd year that I wanted to leave.

AT3: I woke up and decided I was done and didn’t resign contract. No job lined up. I couldn’t handle it. I was missing my kids growing up, the job caused my divorce, I was tired and frustrated all the time. While I was teaching, my school wanted to make me an assistant

principle, so I started working on my master's degree. The stress of everything caused me to have a heart attack. Knew then it was time to leave.

AT4: It was what had to do at the time for my family.

AT5: I would still be there if contract was renewed. I was forced to leave. I found out from a student that I was being let go at the end of the year. Then I went and confirmed it from my administration.

AT6: I hated the school system, school, and some co-teachers. The CTE director was not supportive. I was just tired of teaching ag in general.

AT7: I left the teaching profession twice. In leaving my first position, I was employed prior to turning in my intent to leave form to the principal. The principal actually avoided me for two weeks in an effort to keep me from leaving. In leaving my second position, I resigned in a written letter toward the end of my FMLA leave for the birth of our son.

8: Factors that led your final decision to leave the Ag classroom?

AT1: "It broke my heart to leave it, but with the politics of the education system, my mental health and family was more important." School I work at now is closer to home, no FFA requirements, not gone all the time (conventions & CDE). My former school did not recognize the time spent doing these things as extended. When I was pregnant, I had 60 days above & beyond regular contract, but they made to take sick days all of July. I was then labeled a "trouble-maker." "Nepotism at its finest."

AT2: The current administration was not supportive of the ag program (principle was supportive but limited, CTE director not involved, no superintendent support. They put troubled kids in ag program. The school's focus was on sports and state testing and not just teaching the kids. My previous internship opened a door to my current job. I wanted to interact

with farmers and not be stuck in a classroom. There is more money and opportunity for advancement outside the classroom.

AT3: I felt I had zero backing of support. They would take the bright kids out of non-testable ag class and put in testable to improve the school's scores, but give me kids that don't want to be there. These kids cause problems and didn't want to learn. I had to fight to get kids who wanted to be in ag class. Even if their family wanted them there and they had an ag background. I had no personal family support to help with own kids when job had so many time requirements. They don't count what all ag teachers do outside of the class during the school year as extra time on a 12-month contract. I was gone all the time. The school had high expectations but no budget for the program. Political outlook into teachers was horrible. I was given SPED kids with no assistance. I was required to teach classes that wasn't qualified for. I had to teach a life skills class for example. I had disrespectful kids. "I felt that FFA & Ag teachers can never breath. What we do is never enough."

AT4: I was driving 64 miles one way. I wanted more time with my family. So, I decided to be a stay at home mom. The ag position I had was part-time at a very rough school. I had a student tazzed and a meth bust in my class.

AT5: My contract not renewed and I can't find another open position where I live.

AT6: I got into a graduate program.

AT7: I left the teaching profession twice. In leaving my first position it came as a matter of giving myself an opportunity to be healthy. During my first two years teaching I went from being on no prescription drugs to taking blood pressure medicine, sleep medicine,

and an antidepressant/antianxiety medicine. The principal was demeaning, overbearing, cold, and thrived on intimidation. An absolute tyrant to work under.

In leaving my second position I became a parent through adoption. Our child was born in November 2018, and I never taught in my classroom again. It had initially been my plan to return to the classroom after my FMLA leave, but we decided to manage our finances so that I could stay at home with our child. Other contributing factors (other than the birth of our son) were an uncooperative and divisive co-teacher and the changing landscape of agricultural education in Tennessee.

9: Consider going back to teaching ag ed? If so, under what conditions?

AT1: Yes – the ag teacher but not FFA advisor side. At this time in her life- family demands & second job & life. No- at former position (Giles) because CTE director is former English teacher & has no clue about CTE.

AT2: not rule it out- love school system he taught at- don't think he would have left if he would have been in a growing program with an excellent experienced mentor.

AT3: still love to teach and being in front of people, so angry let teaching license go. Never go back to ag classroom- takes a team to be an ag teacher.

AT4: after teaching basic science and having a family and farm- don't have the time to commit to it anymore.

AT5: yes- if a position came available where they live, taken other teaching jobs (substitute teaching) to try to get in the door.

AT6: No- not high school, but yes on college ag leadership. "Don't want to feel like I'm tied to my job. Job is job and home is home."

AT7: I would consider reentering the classroom, but it would depend on many factors such as school system, administration, school, co-teachers, etc.

10: Suggestions/Recommendations for current AGED leaders & teachers/educators on prevention them from leaving?

AT1: don't rock the boat- make sure you love it & happy doing what you are doing.

AT2: extremely important to get them plugged in to a very active- reliable performing program. (teachers in these positions don't usually leave). It is a lot for someone fresh out of college to go into a struggling ag program and try to build it up. Increase pay. Don't put troubled kids in ag programs just so they have a place to go. Admin needs to understand ag is just as crucial as a math or chemistry class.

AT3: "Ag teachers are a breed of their own" force admin to go though continuing ed classes to make them aware of what ag teachers have to do, go to FFA contests and CTE events, lose touch of what ag is about.

AT4: need to teach as teachers that it is okay to put your family 1st and it is okay to not do anything. Allow themselves grace when they don't get everything done and to put their families first.

AT5: leaders- robust support system, administration and parents

Alumni programs- a lot of support (financial)

Mentor with a veteran ag teacher or another veteran teacher outside the ag area. Having somebody that knows how a well-established program should go.

New teacher advise- know how to discipline effectively.

AT6: New teachers- "don't think it's going to be like high school" Be ready to deal with administration, and other teacher duties/responsibilities

Student teaching is ideal situation verses reality of having your own classroom. Teacher prep programs cannot really prepare you for the real-world situations.

AT7: Agricultural Education degrees should be offered at every university offering teacher education for future agricultural teachers. There should be a focus on training agriculture teachers in how to work cooperatively with co-teachers in a multi-teacher program. A fair amount of standards should be required for each level of each program of study.

Appendix G

IRB Approved Application

MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board

328 Wells Hall
Murray, KY 42071-3318
270-809-2916• msu.irb@murraystate.edu

TO: Brian Parr, Agricultural Sciences

FROM: Jonathan Baskin, IRB Coordinator JB

DATE: 1/28/2020

RE: Human Subjects Protocol I.D. – IRB # 20-012

The IRB has completed its review of your student's Level 1 protocol entitled *Factors to Leave: Teacher Retention in Secondary Agricultural Education*. After review and consideration, the IRB has determined that the research, as described in the protocol form, will be conducted in compliance with Murray State University guidelines for the protection of human participants.

The forms and materials that have been approved for use in this research study are attached to the email containing this letter. These are the forms and materials that must be presented to the subjects. Use of any process or forms other than those approved by the IRB will be considered misconduct in research as stated in the MSU IRB Procedures and Guidelines section 20.3.

Your stated data collection period is from 1/28/2020 to 1/27/2021.

If data collection extends beyond this period, please submit an Amendment to an Approved Protocol form detailing the new data collection period and the reason for the change.

This Level 1 approval is valid until 1/27/2021.

If data collection and analysis extends beyond this date, the research project must be reviewed as a continuation project by the IRB prior to the end of the approval period, 1/27/2021. You must reapply for IRB approval by submitting a Project Update and Closure form (available at murraystate.edu/irb). You must allow ample time for IRB processing and decision prior to your expiration date, or your research must stop until such time that IRB approval is received. If the research project is completed by the end of the approval period, then a Project Update and Closure form must be submitted for IRB review so that your protocol may be closed. It is your responsibility to submit the appropriate paperwork in a timely manner.

The protocol is approved. You may begin data collection now.

Opportunity *afforded*

murraystate.edu