

A study on Required Characteristics of Effective Teachers in Entrepreneurship Education in Iran

Farhad Lashgarara

Department of Agricultural Extension, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
f_lashgarara@srbiau.ac.ir

Abstract: Entrepreneurship is a way an individual relates to his/her environment be the economic environment or the social environment. Hence, entrepreneurship is important for improve backwardness of the people, economic development of the region, eradication of regional imbalances and better economic gain. Independence, propensity to take risk, personal modernity is some of the characteristics of an entrepreneur. Some scholars argue that education and training need to be placed at the forefront of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship education is realized to be a mean of enhancing human capacity. Consequently, there is a great demand for education in all aspects of development. Agricultural education teachers have the knowledge and skills for preparing students to become entrepreneurs who will pass on knowledge to future generations through teaching and practicing the principles acquired at school. In addition, agriculture teachers have the potential to create awareness of entrepreneurship practices among students. The main purpose of this research is identification of required characteristics of effective teachers in entrepreneurship education in Iran.

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1. Introduction

The agricultural education community envisions “a world where all people value and understand the vital role of agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resource systems”. In order to reach this vision, the strategic plan for agricultural education calls for an abundant supply of highly motivated, well-educated teachers. However, for at least the last 37 years, agricultural education has suffered from a shortage of qualified candidates to accept teaching positions (Rocca and Washburn, 2005).

Although the shortage of qualified teacher candidates has been a continual problem (Camp et al., 2002), the agricultural education literature provides little explanation of the factors that contribute to the teacher shortage. Related research in agricultural education has primarily focused on follow-up studies of recent agricultural education graduates. A few researchers have proposed possible solutions for the shortage; however these studies have not resulted in further investigation. Results of graduate follow-up studies have shown that those who entered teaching were as academically able or more so than their peers who chose not to teach. Graduates who entered the teaching profession were found to have higher cumulative grade point averages and higher grades in student teaching and professional education coursework. Muller and Miller (1993) found agricultural education graduates entering the teaching profession to be no less academically able than their

colleagues who chose to seek employment in other professions (Ibid).

Cole (1984) concluded that teacher educators and teacher preparation programs can have the greatest impact on improving agriculture teacher placement and retention. According to Cole, this can be achieved by ensuring quality student teaching experiences, quality professional and technical preparation, and by reducing specific concerns pertaining to negative outcomes associated with teaching agriculture. Some of the specific concerns mentioned by graduates were spousal support, low salary, long hours, and time for hobbies and recreation.

Another career related concern that has received attention in the agricultural education literature is gender discrimination. Studies have found that the career decisions of female preservice agriculture teachers may be influenced by perceptions of barriers created by gender discrimination. Foster, Pikkert, and Husman (1991) found gender bias to be a definite deterrent to women considering a career in agricultural education. In a nationwide survey of 579 female agriculture teachers, Foster (2001) found 61.7% reported experiencing barriers or challenges due to their gender. When asked the greatest barrier faced by female agriculture teachers, the most common response was “acceptance by peers and other males in industry”. In 1979, Parmley, Bowen, and Warmbrod examined data from previous national supply and demand studies and concluded the teacher

shortage in agricultural education was not a result of a shortfall in the number of graduates from teacher preparation programs, but rather too few of those graduates choosing to enter the teaching profession. Brown (1995) supported this conclusion finding that approximately half of agricultural education graduates were electing not to pursue teaching positions. Brown (1995) found that there were ample numbers of graduates; however the problem lied in insufficient recruitment of those qualified graduates into the profession (Ibid).

In Iran, 23 million people are earning directly from agriculture and nearly 3.5 million of active population is working in this sector. Role of extension and education of agriculture is vital in the agricultural development and can't be gainsaid. Despite the efforts with regards to agricultural development and supporting farmers to improve their competencies in different aspects of their jobs by Iran Agricultural Extension Organization (AES), there are indications that the efficiency and the quality of the support provided by AES have not been enough to serve the farmers' needs. Also AES in Iran is suffering from malfunctions in the area of human resource management and development. Moreover, the challenge of working for extension is included job positions are multidimensional, often including new projects before the old are completed. Frustration and stress are continuous due to the slowness of finishing many projects. Time frames are much longer due to a variety of factors, including a lack of funding, a long approval process, differences between agent and administrative values, and philosophical differences (Asadi et al., 2008).

Some of the definitions of entrepreneurship include:

Confusion with business.

Negative approach: "etatism" is deeply engrained in the political culture.

However, entrepreneurship is a way an individual relates to his/her environment be the economic environment or the social environment.

It is about not accepting things as they are and adapting to their requirements but looking for ways to change it according to one's vision (Ergüder, 2002).

Some of the required reason for entrepreneurship is:

- To improve backwardness of the people.
- Economic development of the region.
- To analysis resource utilization.
- Proper utilization of human potentiality.
- Special attention to take up new activities.
- To create self-employment and generation of employment opportunity.
- Eradication of regional imbalances.
- Better economic gain (Baruah & Com, 2005).

Who is an Entrepreneur?

- He is a person who develops and owns his own enterprise
- He is a moderate risk taker and works under uncertainty for achieving the goal.
- He is innovative
- He peruses the deviant pursuits
- Reflects strong urge to be independent.
- Persistently tries to do something better.
- Dissatisfied with routine activities.
- Prepared to withstand the hard life.
- Determined but patient
- Exhibits sense of leadership
- Also exhibits sense of competitiveness
- Takes personals responsibility
- Oriented towards the future.
- Tends to persist in the face to adversity
- Convert a situation into opportunity (Baruah and Com, 2005).

The characteristics of an Entrepreneur:

- Need for achievement
- High need for power
- Independence
- Propensity to take risk
- Personal modernity
- Support
- Business enterprise
- Leadership (Baruah & Com, 2005).

Education for Entrepreneurship

The fact that most universities do not have short, medium and long term programme for entrepreneurship indicates how much out of touch we are with the realities of our society. This inadequacy must be overcome urgently and existing undergraduate programmes for agriculture and other disciplines must incorporate content for business development, market research and financial management as optional stream. Every student must have a chance to take one of the three streams, entrepreneurial, extension and research and development. The extension may include work with NGOs, international agencies and cooperatives (Gupta, 2007).

Key principles

1. Entrepreneurship represents an important engine of economic growth, income and welfare generation and therefore progress for all, social inclusion and stability in a Euro-Mediterranean region aiming to become a free trade area.

2. Entrepreneurship should be considered as a mindset, which can grow throughout society at large, and therefore should not be seen as limited to a business context.

3. Entrepreneurship is about blending risk-taking, creativity or innovation with sound management, within a new or an existing organization and can occur in any sector or type of business.

4. Building an entrepreneurial society involves everybody. An important role is played by the education system and the media in promoting positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship.

5. Since building an entrepreneurial society is both a current need of Euro-Mediterranean societies and an investment in the future, education for entrepreneurship initiatives should address both young people and adults, reaching them through the education system at all levels in a life long learning perspective (primary and secondary school, higher education, vocational training and adult education).

6. Building an entrepreneurial society requires a major pedagogical reform with new ways of thinking and active teaching methods. This will bring the education system closer to the current and future needs (Baruah & Com, 2005).

Required characteristics of agricultural educators

It is unlikely that any administrator deliberately hires ineffective teachers, or that teacher educators seek to prepare ineffective teachers. Yet, anecdotal evidence suggests that there are ineffective teachers in many schools, in a variety of subject matter areas, including agricultural education. So why does this phenomenon occur, particularly in agricultural education? Perhaps it is because there is little agreement between teacher educators about the specific coursework and experiences required to prepare teachers to be effective. If the characteristics requisite for being an effective agriculture teacher were known, teacher educators could make appropriate decisions in developing preservice students into effective teachers. Subsequently, administrators could make sound decisions in hiring these graduates with the knowledge that they will be effective agriculture teachers. So what are the characteristics of an effective agriculture teacher? (Roberts & Dyer, 2004).

Rosenshine and Furst (1971) identified teacher behavior variables that contributed to teaching effectiveness including:

Variability, enthusiasm, task-oriented, providing students opportunities to learn, using student ideas, amount of criticism (negatively correlated), using structuring comments, types of questions, probing student responses, and level of difficulty of instruction. Young (1990) identified a broader list of characteristics including the ability to plan and execute lessons, monitor student learning and behavior, conduct interesting and focused lessons

based on a variety of methods, and maintain rapport with students and peers. Suydam (1983) indicated that effective teachers let pupils know they are concerned about their achievement; offer encouragement; involve students through questions and discussion; minimize waste time, allowing few distractions and interruptions; establish and follow simple, consistent rules; monitor pupils' behavior carefully; move around the classroom; and give clear directions. Richardson and Arundell (1989) noted that an effective teacher gives a variety of examples, properly plans lessons, is knowledgeable of subject matter, and knowledgeable of student learning (Roberts & Dyer, 2004).

Several studies examined agricultural education teachers specifically. Miller, Kahler, and Rheault (1989) identified five common performance areas for effective agriculture teachers: productive teaching behaviors (which includes designing lifelike situations and activities); organized, structured class management; positive interpersonal relationships; professional responsibilities (which includes completing duties in a timely manner); and personal characteristics (which includes displaying personality traits such as humor and patience). Larsen (1992) and Miller et al. (1989) identified classroom management and classroom organization as influencing the effectiveness of agriculture teachers. Likewise, student motivation, the ability to identify student needs, and recognition of students for their achievements were also identified as characteristics of effective teachers.

According to Luft and Thompson (1995), students identified an effective agriculture teacher as having the following characteristics: showing enthusiasm for teaching, serving as good role models for students, being committed to helping students learn, showing their commitment to teaching by belonging to professional teacher organizations, enjoying teaching, being self confident and poised, being prompt and on time, and being neatly dressed and well groomed. Foster and Finley (1995) reported that effective agriculture teachers were individually strong in human relation and personal attitudes, adept at conflict resolution, highly motivated, committed to personal feelings, utilized good public relation skills, accepted by co-workers, demonstrated leadership and cooperation, possessed good human relation skills, and demonstrated good professional etiquette. Whereas much research exists on the components of effective classroom instruction, additional research explores elements of effective instruction unique to agricultural education. However, missing from the literature base are the characteristics of effective agriculture teachers in terms of their responsibilities in conducting a total agricultural education program.

The responsibility of preparing future effective agriculture teachers to conduct a total agricultural program primarily resides with teacher educators at universities with agricultural education programs. Teacher educators develop coursework and design programs to effectively achieve this outcome. In doing so, they must often rely on their own personal experiences, as there is limited research-based information on the characteristics of effective agriculture teachers in the total school program (Miller et al., 1989). By identifying those characteristics, teacher educators can focus on developing those skills in their students. In summary, Categorized Characteristics of an Effective Agriculture Teacher includes (Ibid).

- Effectively plans for instruction
- Effectively evaluates student achievement
- Communicates well with others
- Effectively recognizes achievements
- Effectively motivates students
- Has a love of agriculture (passionate for subject matter)
- Effectively manages student behavior; maintains discipline in class
- Encourages, counsels, and advises students
- Effectively determines students needs
- Uses a variety of teaching techniques
- Incorporates science and other areas of the school curriculum into the agriculture program
- Has excellent knowledge of the subject matter
- Is innovative; uses technology in the classroom; adapts well to change
- Is capable of solving problems and handling many different tasks at the same time
- Is knowledgeable of teaching and learning theory
- Has a sound knowledge of FFA, actively advises the FFA
- Has a sound SAE knowledge, actively supervises, and encourages SAE projects
- Works well with parents
- Establishes and maintains good community relations
- Works well with alumni and advisory groups
- Works well with other teachers and administrators in his/her school
- Maintains an effective public relations program
- Effectively recruits new students
- Puts in extra hours; is dedicated to doing a good job
- Displays a positive/professional image
- Enjoys teaching and exhibits a positive attitude towards the teaching Profession
- Improves professionally by seeking opportunities for continued Learning
- Takes actions to prevent burnout and to re-energize him/her

- Effectively manages, maintains, and improves laboratories
- Effectively manages, operates and evaluates the agriculture program on a continuous basis
- Effectively manages finances, grants, and special projects
- Cares for students
- Is motivated
- Is enthusiastic
- Is self-confident
- Has an understanding and supportive spouse/family
- Is honest, moral, and ethical
- Is open-minded
- Is well organized; has excellent time management skills
- Is resourceful

2. Material and Methods

The methodology used in this study involved a combination of descriptive and quantitative research.

Measuring respondent's attitudes towards e learning has been achieved largely through structured questionnaire surveys. The usual questionnaire approach to measure attitude is to include a range of semantic-differential (with good/bad options for example) and Likert items (with agree/disagree options for example) to operationalize the attitude construct.

Content and face validity were established by a panel of experts consisting of faculty members at Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch and some specialists in the Ministry of Agriculture. Minor wording and structuring of the instrument were made based on the recommendation of the panel of experts.

3. Conclusion & Recommendations

A limited number of studies have been conducted related to the career decisions of preservice agriculture teachers. These studies were primarily graduate follow-ups and have shown that students who pursue careers in teaching are as academically able or more so, than their peers who chose to not teach. Additional research examining the career decisions of agricultural education graduates is greatly needed in order to address the root causes of the shortage of teachers.

Self-efficacy has been found to have an influence on career decision. Additionally, teacher efficacy had a positive relationship with teacher performance and commitment, as well as the achievement of students. Research investigating the effect of preservice teachers' efficacy on their career decisions is necessary as it may provide a basis for interventions to increase preservice teachers' sense of

efficacy. Such interventions may ultimately impact their decision to enter the teaching profession.

Environmental influences shape learning experiences and moderate the process of transforming career interests into choice actions. Perceptions of barriers, such as gender discrimination, impede career aspirations while support systems facilitate the pursuit of those aspirations. Additional research is warranted to identify potential career barriers and supports for preservice agriculture teachers and to determine the influence of such barriers and supports on an individual's career decisions.

The assertion that effective agriculture teachers possess certain personal qualities is supported by Luft and Thompson (1995), Miller et al. (1989), and Phipps and Osborne (1988). According to the results of this research, if we are to produce effective teachers, the personal qualities identified in this study must either exist prior to the time students enter teacher education programs, or be developed. In a study of teacher education programs, McLean and Camp (2000) reported that most of the teacher education programs they surveyed have curricula that address seven of the eight identified categories. Additionally, their study showed that none of the surveyed teacher education programs specifically contained subject matter aimed at developing the personal qualities identified by this study. Consequently, it is recommended that additional coursework or experiences that focus on the development of personal qualities be provided for preservice teachers.

Interestingly, the greatest number of characteristics was identified within the area of instruction. This verifies the continued belief that for teachers to be effective, they must first master those characteristics that guide instruction – that is, teaching methods/techniques. These similarities empirically verify that being an effective agriculture teacher goes beyond classroom teaching. Creating effective agriculture teachers is imperative for the long-term sustainability of agricultural education programs. Ineffective teachers are likely to become dissatisfied with teaching as a career and seek other

employment opportunities (Bennett, Iverson, Rohs, Langone, & Edwards, 2002). Likewise, if ineffective teachers remain in classrooms, anecdotal evidence suggests that programs close and that countless students will not have an opportunity for education in agriculture.

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Corresponding Author:

Dr. Farhad Lashgarara
Department of Agricultural Extension,
Science and Research Branch,
Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
E-mail: f_lashgarara@srbiau.ac.ir

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