

The Wildness of Teacher Education

Becky Mounsey
Tarleton State University

Dr. Kyle McGregor
Tarleton State University

Introduction

An agricultural teacher education curriculum is the future for preservice agriculture education teachers. Agricultural science teachers are a must when it comes to agricultural literacy; but are Texas's agricultural education programs doing their job in training agricultural teachers in all aspects of agriculture? Many programs consist of leadership courses, animal science courses, agronomy courses, horticulture courses, agricultural mechanization courses and most other aspects of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for agricultural science courses. One course found in the TEKS that is of concern is Agriscience 381, Wildlife and Recreational Management.

With the decrease in prices offered to producers for their products, wildlife and recreational management opportunities have increased. With this increase comes an increase in job availabilities. High school agricultural students need to be informed of these job availabilities and properly instructed on different management techniques. An education in wildlife sciences could be very useful to the agricultural science student of today. Even the Vocational Education Act of 1963 states, vocational agriculture needs to prepare students for any occupation involving knowledge and skills in agricultural subjects. If the state mandates that students need to be properly educated about wildlife then it stands to reason that agricultural science teachers also need to be properly instructed in wildlife and recreational management.

Is a change needed in our present agricultural education programs to produce a well-rounded individual ready for the total of agricultural instruction? Research efforts are called for if such a change is to occur in Texas's agricultural education programs. "The agricultural education profession should develop specific efforts to continually study, discuss, and identify issues of importance in relationship to preservice curriculum and specifically clinical experiences" (Dobbins, 2000).

Plan of Action

With the probable dilemma identified, a descriptive research project will be undertaken and will serve as the author's thesis. The instrument used in this study will be a mailed questionnaire with items related to the agricultural science teacher's own wildlife and recreational management background. Other data will be gathered relating to course work taken by teachers in their college experiences, demographic information involving their Agriscience 381 class, and their own perceptions of importance and availability regarding different aspects of wildlife and recreational management as stated in the TEKS, the Instructional Material Service (IMS) packets and other curriculum materials. To determine their course work taken in college, a composite of classes will be developed containing all wildlife classes that are offered in universities in Texas that also offer teacher education programs. These surveys will then be administered to Texas

agricultural science teachers that are randomly selected from a list provided by the Vocational Agricultural Teachers Association of Texas (VATAT). The Dillman tailored design method will be utilized for administration (Dillman, 1999). Results will be analyzed using SPSS for Windows to explain perceptions of Texas agricultural science teachers regarding wildlife and recreational management course work in the teacher education programs in Texas.

Results to Date

The results to date include the review of past literature over the subject of wildlife science and teacher education programs and program development. The results also include agriculture science teacher interviews and teacher educator perceptions of change in programs. Other results include agricultural education degree programs found in twelve universities across Texas. The degree programs were researched to find which universities require wildlife science courses. Results indicate that three of the twelve universities require at least one course relating to wildlife science for a degree in agricultural education with teacher certification.

Future Plans

The instrument to be administered in this study is under construction and will be finished in time to send out to randomly selected agricultural teachers before April of 2003. Following the retrieval of surveys from Texas agricultural science teachers the findings will then hopefully be utilized to encourage Texas agricultural teacher education programs to produce graduates who are better suited to instruct the total curriculum of agriscience. "Teacher preparation and in-service education programs must be revised and expanded to develop more competent teachers and other professional personnel staff, administer and supervise educational programs in and about agriculture" (Aldrich, 1988).

Resources

The main resources for this study will include Texas agricultural science teachers and agricultural teacher education programs in Texas. Other resources will include; the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for the use of the TEKS, IMS for its proposed lessons to be taught in Agriscience 381, Wildlife and Recreational Management, other curriculum materials and the VATAT.

References

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Dillman, D.A. (1999). Mail and Internet survey: The tailored design method (2nd ed.). New York: Wiley, John & Sons, Inc.

Dobbins, T.R. (2000). Clinical experiences for agricultural teacher education programs in North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia. Proceedings of the Twenty-seventh National Agricultural Education Research Conference (pp. 543-555), San Diego, California.

