

Teaching Intentions: Orientation and Commitment Among Family and Consumer Sciences Teachers

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The purpose of this study was to examine the teaching intentions (orientation and commitment) among practicing family and consumer sciences (FACS) teachers. Members of the [State] Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher Association were asked to participate in a web-based survey. Results revealed that the majority of respondents entered the profession because of the subject matter and plan to teach FACS until they retire; however, most indicated the intention to retire within 10 years. The findings provide a FACS teacher profile that positions FACS state leaders and school administrators to better plan for the demands of the future.

The supply and demand of family and consumer sciences teachers (FACS) continues to be a concern for the profession. [State], similar to other states, is facing a shortage of available FACS teachers to fill vacancies. The [State] State Board of Education (2008) reported that there were 53 FACS teacher-certified graduates available to fill the positions of the 182 FACS teachers who had either retired or left their teaching assignments at the end of the 2007 school year. The imbalance raises several questions about the future of FACS programs and increases the pressure to identify the teaching intentions of current FACS teachers for recruitment and projection purposes. Teaching intentions refer to teachers' (a) orientation or reason for becoming FACS teachers, and (b) professional commitment, meaning their plans to remain in the classroom as FACS teachers (Ndoye, Imig, & Parker, 2010).

The purpose of this study was to examine the teaching intentions among practicing FACS teachers in [State]. More specifically, reasons for becoming a FACS teacher and commitment to continuing to teach FACS were identified.

Orientation and Professional Commitment

Career choice among individuals is shaped by many influences throughout one's life. Fischman, Schutte, Solomon, and Wu Lam (2001) found that people who choose careers in the helping profession, such as teaching, do so based on childhood experiences, personal and social experiences, and inspiration to serve others. For example, a young adult who enjoyed learning to plan menus for the family may choose a career in nutrition or as a chef.

Serow (1994) suggested that understanding one's own motivations is helpful in making a career choice. Harms and Knobloch (2005) identified six factors – both intrinsic and extrinsic motives– that influenced career choice of teachers. Three factors --serving others, touching people's lives, and being *called* to a career – together measured intrinsic career choice motivation, while the remaining three -- salary and benefits, balance between career and personal time, and opportunities for advancement/personal growth – together measured extrinsic career choice motivation.

People likely are attracted to teaching because of a combination of altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic motives. Such motives are marked by unselfish concern for others that originate from within the teacher or from one or more factors external to the teacher. Studies of prospective and practicing teachers revealed that the two main altruistic reasons for choosing to teach were the desire to work with young people and the desire to contribute to society (Harms & Knobloch, 2005; Seng Yong, 1995).

Specifically, research indicates that individuals choose to teach FACS for a number of reasons. Mimbs, Stewart, and Heath-Camp (1998) studied pre-service FACS teachers' decisions to pursue teacher certification. Interests in FACS subject matter (e.g., child development, consumer economics, food and nutrition, clothing and textiles) followed by the influence of a secondary FACS teacher were cited as the primary reasons for choosing to teach FACS. Mimbs (2002) found that reasons listed for a FACS teaching career included enjoyment from working with young people, helping others, and being inspired by participants' own teachers. The career choice reasons cited by FACS teacher participants in these studies were based on altruistic values, which are intrinsic factors.

While intrinsic factors influence individuals to enter teaching careers, extrinsic factors have been shown to influence teachers' decisions to leave (Harms & Knobloch, 2005). Research related to reasons teachers left the classroom included an imbalance between career and personal time, salary, lack of administration support, nature of students, and lack of respect (Fischman, et al., 2001; Knight, 1977; Marlow, Inmar, & Betancourt-Smith, 1996). Any one of these reasons may lead teachers to experience a loss of control and/or feel devalued; teachers may then withdraw due to a lack of passion and enthusiasm for educating students, and may ultimately exit the classroom.

In particular to FACS, reasons identified for why FACS teachers leave the profession were studied by Mimbs (2000). Reasons most often cited were employment in another occupation, low pay, inability to find a position in a specific geographical location, extra school responsibilities, and family responsibilities. For example, the time commitment and additional tasks (e.g., shopping for food labs) with teaching FACS is not comparable to other occupational opportunities that are less demanding and that offer more financial rewards.

Theoretical Framework

The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent, Hackett, & Brown, 1994) is a theoretical framework that extends Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory to occupational considerations and persistence behaviors. According to SCCT, three cognitive variables are believed to regulate an individual's career behavior: self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals.

Self-efficacy refers to people's beliefs in their own abilities to perform specific actions, which can serve to motivate people to achieve specific goals, such as pursuing a career in a certain area (Feltz & Payment, 2005). Outcome expectations are personal beliefs about the probable consequences or outcomes of performing specific actions (Lent et al., 1994). Smith (2001) suggested outcome expectations occur in three forms through learned experiences: physical (i.e., work environment), social (i.e., recognition), and self-evaluative (i.e., satisfaction). Personal goals organize and guide behavior, including the determination to engage in a particular activity or to affect a particular outcome (Bandura, 1986).

Together the three variables play a highly influential role in occupational pursuits and may regulate whether a person will initiate and maintain certain career behaviors (Bandura, 1997;

Hackett & Betz, 1997) such as becoming and remaining a FACS teacher. Through a process of intervening learning experiences that shape one's abilities and impacts self-efficacy and outcome expectations, one's vocational choice and commitment are shaped and reshaped (Savickas & Lent, 1994).

In the context of this study, the SCCT underpins the orientation and commitment of FACS teachers. Individuals who have experienced successful learning opportunities within some facet of FACS, such as enjoying the subject matter or participation in 4-H extension may have an increase in self-efficacy expectations and in turn, solidify their career goal by becoming a FACS teacher. With regards to commitment, if a FACS teacher perceives few barriers within their career, the likelihood of success reinforces their career choice. But, if the barriers are viewed as significant, their self-efficacy and expected outcomes have changed and as a result their commitment is weakened, and withdrawal actions can occur.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the teaching intentions among practicing FACS teacher in [State]. More specifically, reasons for choosing teaching in FACS as a career and professional commitment to remaining in the chosen profession were identified. The following objectives guided this study.

1. Describe the personal and employment demographics of current [State] FACS teachers.
2. Describe [State] FACS teachers' orientation, or reasons for becoming FACS teachers.
3. Describe [State] FACS teachers' professional commitment, or intentions to remain teaching FACS.

Method

The population consisted of [State] Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher Association (XFACSTA) members during the 2007-08 year. The sampling frame was established using the XFACSTA membership list, and the entire population (N = 283) was studied. This study was conducted with XFACSTA members because of the organizational purpose of "To assume and maintain active state leadership in the promotion of Vocational/Family and Consumer Sciences" (XFACSTA, 2009). Therefore, the generalizability of the findings is limited to this population.

This study used a descriptive research design with an online survey method. The survey was developed and adapted from previous research by Tripp (2006). The Tripp (2006) instrument was designed to gather statewide data and information regarding trends and issues within the FACS profession in the State of California. The survey was field tested by seven secondary FACS teachers and yielded a 64% response return rate.

The survey consisted of two sections: orientation and commitment to the FACS teaching profession, and personal and employment background. More specifically, Section One of the survey asked subjects to indicate: (a) the main reason for becoming a FACS teacher; (b) plans for remaining in the FACS profession; (c) if considering leaving the FACS teaching profession, primary reason for leaving; and (d) timeline for withdrawal if considering retirement. Subjects selected only one response to each survey statement. Section Two asked for subjects to indicate (a) gender, (b) age, (c) ethnicity, (d) marital status, (e) teacher education degree program, (f) highest degree attained, (g) total teaching service, and (h) teaching time (full- or part-time).

Researchers received permission from their institutional Human Subjects Committee to conduct the research study. A cover letter that included the survey link was emailed to every

teacher in the accessible population. Participants were given one week to complete the survey. Dillman, Smyth, and Christian's (2009) procedures were used to increase the response rate. That is, following the one week deadline, two subsequent weekly emails were sent to remind respondents to participate in the research study. Eighty-one respondents (34%) completed the questionnaire.

Findings

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

Research Objective 1: Describe the personal and employment demographics of current [State] FACS teachers.

The findings from the personal demographics revealed that all respondents were female (100%), the majority were married (76.5%), and Caucasian (80.2%). The ages of the respondents' ranged from 23 to 70 years old. The mean of the respondents' ages was 46.36, with a standard deviation of 12.67.

The employment demographics data indicated that the total teaching years among respondents ranged from 1 to 36 years ($M = 16.57$ years; $sd = 10.87$). The majority of respondents completed their teacher certification degree through traditional teacher education programs (87.7%), taught full-time (82.7%), and has obtained a master's degree (53.1%).

Research Objective 2: Describe [State] FACS teachers' orientation or reasons for becoming FACS teachers.

The majority of respondents indicated enjoyment of the subject matter (71.6%) as their reason for becoming an FACS teacher followed by the influence of their high school or middle school FACS teacher (18.5%) (see Table 1). Approximately five percent of the subjects reported *other* reasons for becoming a FACS teacher. *Other* included participation in community organizations such as 4-H and FCCLA-HERO (Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America – career division) in high school.

Table 1
Orientation: Reasons for Becoming an FACS Teacher

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
FACS subject matter	58	71.6
Influence of your high school or middle school FACS teacher	15	18.5
Other	4	4.9
Ideal schedule with having a family	2	2.5
Enjoy working with children/students	2	2.5
Total	81	100.0

Research Objective 3: Describe [State] FACS teachers' professional commitment, or intentions to remain teaching FACS.

The majority of the respondents planned to continue teaching FACS until retirement (76.5%) (see Table 2). Sixty-nine percent indicated that if they considered leaving FACS teaching, it would be due to retirement. Respondents also reported their approximate time to

retirement. Nearly 41% of respondents indicated they would not retire for at least 10 or more years, 24.7% projected six to 10 years until retirement, 13.6% have three to five years until retirement, and 16.0% projected one to two years until retirement.

Table 2
Commitment: Plans for Remaining in the Profession

Plans	Frequency	Percent
I plan to stay teaching FACS until I retire.	62	76.5
I am not sure what my plans are.	8	9.9
I plan to stay teaching FACS unless I have the opportunity to get another job.	6	7.4
I definitely plan to leave the FACS teaching profession.	5	6.2
Total	81	100.0

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the teaching intentions among practicing FACS teachers in [State]. More specifically, orientation or reasons for becoming a FACS teacher and their professional commitment to remaining teaching FACS were identified.

Lankard (1994) expressed that lack of diversity (ethnic and gender) in the specialization teaching areas as an educational concern, such as in FACS. This concern stems from the importance of educational environments that reflect the diversity of society (Orfield, 2001). The results of this study indicated all respondents were female and the majority was Caucasian. These findings are consistent with research on demographic profiles of FACS teachers by Bartley and Sneed (2004) in Tennessee, Mimbs (2002) in Missouri, and Tripp (2006) in California; their subjects were all female and mostly Caucasian. Interestingly, the mean age of respondents in this study was 46 years, which was identical to the aforementioned profile studies (Bartley & Sneed, 2004; Tripp, 2006).

The employment data indicated that the teaching experience was distributed from one to 36 years and the majority teaches full-time. Similar results were found by Tripp (2006) among California FACS teachers. Approximately 88% of subjects in the present study indicated that they received their teaching certificates through traditional teacher education programs. Research indicates that most career and technical education teachers, which include FACS, are certified through traditional teacher education programs (Ruhland & Bremer, 2004; Walter & Gray, 2002). The majority of respondents in this study have earned at least a master's degree. The research literature does not specify highest level of education data for FACS teachers. Therefore, this finding (a) infers that FACS teachers value continuing with higher education, and (b) provides a point of reference for future profile studies regarding FACS teachers continuing their education.

The top reasons selected for becoming a FACS teacher by respondents in this study was personal enjoyment of the subject matter followed by the influence by a middle or high school FACS teacher. These findings collaborate with existing FACS career choice literature. Mimbs, Stewart, and Heath-Camp (1998) reported interest in the FACS subject matter influenced their subjects' choice of FACS as their teaching discipline while Feltehausen and Couch (1991) found that it is often through an introduction by teachers in secondary schools that individuals become interested in careers in FACS.

The social cognitive career theoretical framework describes personal variables and their interaction with other aspects of the individual and the environment to form their career pathway (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000). The respondents' experiences in this study included enjoyment of the subject matter or influence of a FACS teacher created the interest to pursue a career as a FACS teacher. These findings may also relate to the study population's membership in an organization that promotes the goals of FACS education.

Retirement has been a national contributor to the FACS teacher shortage. The majority of respondents in this study indicated they plan to stay teaching FACS until they retire, however more than half indicated they will retire within 10 years. [State], similar to other states such as California (Tripp, 2006) and Missouri (Mimbs, 2002) is experiencing a shortage of FACS teachers, and likely has a forthcoming decade of this problem. One-fourth of the respondents in this study are not as firm in their commitment to staying in the FACS classroom. According to the SCCT, these respondents' self-efficacy or their belief in their own abilities to perform specific actions has changed as a result of the experience as a teacher.

Implications

The findings provide a FACS teacher profile that positions FACS state leaders and school administrators to better project the demands for the future. That is, data about commitment of [State] FACS teachers provide data for future planning. For example, the profile of a [State] FACS teacher is a 46 year old, white female, who has been teaching for 17 years, chose teaching because of the subject matter, and plans to retire within the next 10 years.

Future planning will need to intensify to replace the maturing population. Results of this study are consistent with literature in that people choose FACS because of the subject matter as well as the influence of a FACS teacher. This finding helps to confirm the powerful role a middle or high school teacher FACS teacher plays in their students' career choices. School administrators and FACS leaders can better inform FACS teachers about their influence on the future career choices of their students. FACS teachers need to be aware of students who have taken an extreme interest in or who are talented in the subject matter and encourage them to pursue a career as a FACS teacher.

Caucasian females continue to dominate the gender statistics in the FACS teacher education profession. Due to the lack of diversity in FACS, males and minority students should be judiciously targeted during the recruitment process. Dohner, Loyd, and Stenberg (1990) profiled male FACS teachers and again the most significant influence for their career decision was their FACS teacher. FACS teachers need to encourage these students to consider FACS as a career. Public relations materials (e.g., brochures, posters) should include pictures of males and minority FACS teachers that can be used as silent impression advertisement where people can associate and envision him/herself as a FACS teacher.

To increase the number of available FACS teachers, the profession needs to have a potential supply which implicates teacher education programs, specifically enrollment numbers. The secondary FACS teacher plays a pivotal role for student recruitment in FACS teacher education programs. Two states, Arizona and Illinois, have recently implemented similar recruitment programs that link potential teacher candidates with the state universities' FACS teacher education programs. The programs, "One for the Future" and the "Elite Conference" requests high school FACS teachers within the state nominate students as possible FACS teachers; these students attend a one day, all expense paid conference where they learn about

FACS education and have time to meet with FACS teacher educators and discuss education programs at specific universities. These programs can be modeled by other states.

Another source of increasing the enrollment in FACS teacher education programs is by attracting individuals with bachelor's degrees in FACS-related areas (e.g., nutrition, clothing and textiles, career counseling) to pursue certification using a nontraditional format, called alternative certification in [State]. Following an approximate 2-3 year program, such students would complete the teacher education coursework required and student teach. The nontraditional format can be tailored to the needs of the students willing to make a career change by providing distance education courses, using a Master's degree as an incentive, and/or cohorts.

FACS teacher education programs need to work closely with secondary school personnel including guidance counselors, career and technical education (CTE)/FACS Department chairs, FACS teachers, and state teacher organizations. Establishment of advisory boards with invested parties could serve to initiate lines of communication. Communication is the key factor in the recruitment and retention of FACS teachers.

While most FACS teacher respondents in this study indicated they are staying in the classroom, 25% of them were either uncertain of their plans or planning to leave. FACS professionals and school administrators need to reach out to such individuals and intervene immediately in efforts to retain them in the classroom. The FACS education discipline cannot afford to lose a single teacher.

Conclusions

The data gathered from this study allows for FACS professionals to initiate and develop a strategic framework for recruitment and retention efforts. If proactive measures are not taken soon there could be detrimental effects, such as fewer FACS teacher education programs and/or elimination of secondary FACS program, which have already threatened other states. [State], as a result of this study, can better project what is in store for the FACS education profession in the coming years. The results are specific to [State], but they are consistent with findings in other regions. FACS professional leaders need to start now planning for the future, in order to have a future.

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