

## Issues Facing Urban Agriscience Teachers: A Delphi Study

### A Critique

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The authors start by establishing a strong need for research on urban programs and present compelling statistics about some of the unique challenges facing urban schools. Since the National Council for Agricultural Education has endorsed the goal of having 10,000 quality agricultural education programs by the year 2015 (we have 7,200 now) and it is obvious this growth will primarily occur in urban areas, this is a timely study.

The process and procedures used in the Delphi process were sound. The statement that “All four regions of the National Association of Agricultural Educators were represented in the sample.” did cause me concern since the NAAE has six regions.

My major concern with this study is encapsulated in the researchers’ statement that “The obvious conclusion which can be drawn from this study is that urban agriscience teachers have many issues.” The teachers identified seventeen issues as major issues. However, most of the issues identified ARE NOT unique to urban schools. I would suggest that most agriculture teachers, whether urban or rural might identify “inadequate funding from the state”, “managing numerous student programs and events”, and “balancing work and family” as major issues. I found very few of the concerns listed to be “urban oriented.” If this same research process had been used with a group of rural teachers, many of the same issues would have emerged. This fundamental problem diminishes the usefulness of this research.

One other comment: For the past 30 years there has been a major emphasis to have a strong theoretical foundation for our research. This theoretical foundation could be as simple as identifying a need or problem that should be studied and providing a rationale as to why it is important to study that problem. Over time I have noticed a trend toward identifying a specific model or theory and then forcing our research to match up with that model. I get the impression this is just an academic exercise. And I will be the first to admit that I have conducted research then went shopping for a “theoretical model” that would fit what I had done when it was time to write a paper. If this is what we do, then we probably should call a halt to the practice. Instead of referring to the “Theoretical Framework” of our research perhaps we should start using terms like “What is the Problem?” and “Why is This Research Important to the Profession?” It would save space and force us to think about whether or not the research is truly important to the profession. These researchers did a particularly good job of justifying their research. Yet it appears they felt the need to add the “Theoretical Framework Academic Parsley” by referring to the Dunkin and Biddle model. This model is often cited in our profession. This model can be made to fit nearly any study in agricultural education. So why don’t we declare Dunkin and Biddle the “Universal Agricultural Education Theoretical Framework (UAETF)” and then we could just write in all our papers that the research is based on the UAETF. Everyone would understand that and we could save time and space by not having to explain it.