Agricultural Perceptions of Participants of the Summer Agricultural Institute

Heather Jepsen, University of Arizona
Monica Pastor, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, Maricopa County
Jack Elliot, University of Arizona

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to determine the influence of the Summer Agricultural Institute (SAI) on agricultural perceptions of the participants (educators). This study included the personal drawings of the participants in order to analyze and describe the perceptions. The scope of the study used data from the past six years, which was approximately 160 participants. Findings were obtained through a unique image analysis software program entitled Atlas.ti, which analyzed before and after agricultural drawings from participants. This program assisted in finding that there is an increase in awareness of agricultural technology. Most drawings illustrate that after the Summer Agricultural Institute participants are more aware of the different advanced technologies used throughout the agricultural industry.

Purpose and Objectives and Need for the Study

The purpose of this research study was to determine the influence of the Summer Agricultural Institute on agricultural perceptions of the participants and ultimately the level of agriculture literacy within the group. In order to determine the perceptions of the participants the following objective for this study was created: To compare and contrast the difference between pre-SAI drawings and post-SAI drawings of participants from 1999-2004.

Methods and Procedures

Six years worth of data (drawings) were obtained from the extension agent that implements SAI experience. There were approximately 320 pictures that were divided into year and named (yy initials 1 or 2). Categories were then created by what was observed in the drawings. This being a common technique called flat coding where drawings were placed in to categories based on observation (Muhr, & Friese, 2003). The software then analyzes the categories and a web like structure is created showing the associations and detail in each picture. First the pictures are analyzed for their content. Then further analysis is conducted with comparisons of the content.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental</th>
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<td>Barn</td>
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<th>Agriculturalist</th>
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<td>Farmer</td>
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Figure 1 Flat Coding Key
Results

The results have shown that the initial drawing illustrated that the participant is aware of certain aspects of the agriculture industry, but after participating in SAI they are educated about the history of that certain field, and how that area agriculture affects their lives. Overall their level of agricultural literacy was increased.

Figure 11 participant #4 before SAI

Figure 12 participant #4 after SAI
Summary, Conclusion, Recommendations, and Implications

SAI participants’ views and perceptions of agriculture were enhanced and broadened as illustrated by the analyses of their pre- and post-drawings. Therefore, the authors recommend that SAI experiences be implemented for all public school educators. The implications of this recommendation are two-fold. First, if implemented the population will have a better understanding of agriculture, and second, it will become a paradigm shift in teacher in-service opportunities.
References


