Assessing of the Effect of Cooperative Teaching on Future Agricultural Educators and Cooperative Extension Agents

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Introduction  Agricultural education and cooperative extension have much in common. Possibly their most visible commonality is their interest in educating youth about agriculture. Therefore, cooperation is an important concept for both groups in order to provide the most effective and efficient agricultural services and programs. In order to better understand the working relationship between the two groups, it is important to determine the extent of collaboration and competition that currently exists between the two respective agencies, and explore possible opportunities for improvement through cooperative learning techniques within school settings. While cooperative learning offers an additional opportunity for improved relations between agricultural education and extension programs, educators may not be taking advantage of this learning opportunity.

Purpose  The purpose of this research was to determine the impact of cooperation/collaboration teaching techniques in building stronger relationships between agricultural education and extension students. The poster illustrates this relationship and assesses the effect of cooperative teaching on each group.

Information and Major Points  A cooperative teaching course offered in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communications at University of Florida served as the basis for the study. Cooperative teaching techniques involved similar academic information and provided various opportunities to examine potential areas of cooperation within each program area. A pre-test/post-test survey instrument was used to collect data based on the course objectives. Data for the study were used to determine change in knowledge caused by combined coursework and activities, and change in the awareness and perception of cooperation between the students as a result of cooperative teaching techniques. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores, standard deviations, and frequencies, correlations, and paired samples t-tests were utilized.

Conclusions  The results of this study indicated a significant change in knowledge, a 15 point increase in test scores, as a result of cooperative/collaborative teaching techniques. A slightly positive change in awareness and perceptions of cooperation between agricultural and extension education students resulted through the use of cooperative teaching techniques.

Educational Importance  Therefore, educators in each program area should strive to include aspects of agricultural and extension education into their curriculum to build cooperative knowledge within students. This foundational knowledge established at the collegiate level may provide an improved working relationship between students as they enter their professional careers. Educators should continue to improve cooperative teaching techniques and identify potential areas for teamwork when designing courses. In addition, this teaching method could be utilized for professional development programs, preservice and in-service training, and to develop more advanced cooperative teaching courses at the university level. Finally, positive perceptions and awareness of each group’s responsibilities should increase the long-term cooperation between professionals during their careers and strengthen community agricultural services and programs overall.