

Fishing for Answers: Barriers to the Adoption of an Agricultural English Course

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Introduction

Problem

- 47% of first-time California community college students are enrolled in remedial English coursework (Student Success, 2015).
- California high school dropout rates are at 11% (Gottfried & Plasman, 2017).
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) coursework has been linked to lower dropout rates; particularly in grades 11 and 12 (Gottfried & Plasman, 2017).
- The Business of Sustainable Agriculture course was developed as a UCCI curriculum project to help high school seniors gain skills in writing and entrepreneurship in agriculture while meeting University of California area “b” (English) entrance requirement for 12th graders (UCCI, 2018).
- According to the UCCI (2018) portal, only one school is currently offering the course.

Purpose

- Identify barriers to the adoption of beneficial curriculum capable of increasing literacy, preventing dropout, and producing a viable workforce that will strengthen CTE programs in agriculture.

Methodology

Sample

- 30 leaders in California Agricultural Education

Instrumentation

- A Delphi process was used to form a consensus using 4 rounds.
- Reliability was high with at least 11 participants (Dalkey, 1969).
- Subsequent rounds were based off of responses to initial question.

Initial Question

- To your knowledge, what barriers do you perceive as preventing California teachers of school-based agricultural education (SBAE) from implementing the UCCI Business of Sustainable Agriculture (English 12 integrated with entrepreneurship and agribusiness) course of UC English area “b” credit?

Theoretical Framework

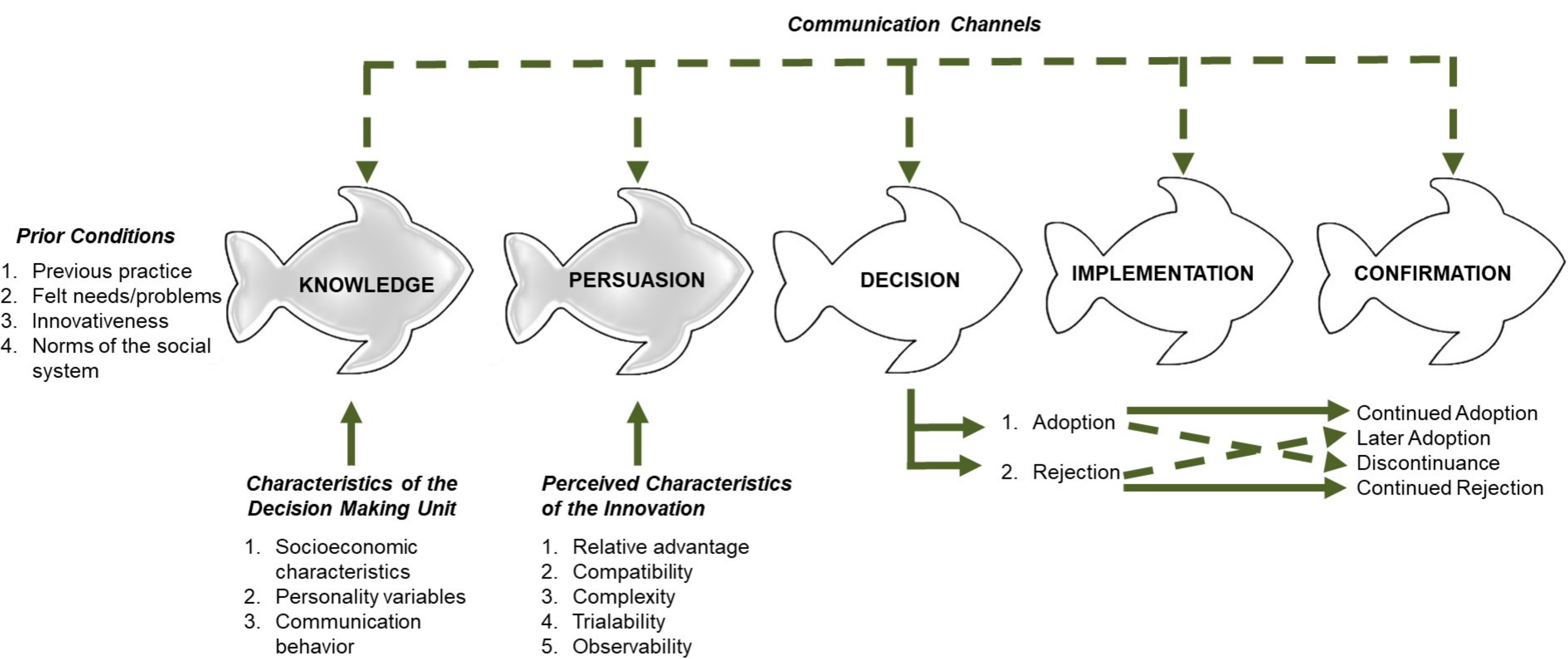


Figure 1. Innovation-Decision Process. Adapted from Diffusions of Innovation by E. M. Rogers (2003).

Conclusions

Respondents agreed with the top five barriers and offered comments:

- “At a small high school, this option to offer yet another singleton class will be a huge challenge.”
- “Our administrators would support the decision if we could share how it related to the vision of the program but it would be more likely that they would support an academy style model where an English teacher taught the course with only agriculture students participating.”
- “With appropriate professional development or some type of "crash course" refresher, I feel that agriculture teachers would be better equipped to explain the relevance of this type of course to their colleagues and districts. If content and resources are readily available for this course, it would make it much easier for agriculture teachers to adopt it.”

Recommendations

- It is recommended a follow up study be conducted at the current program who has implemented the UCCI Business of Sustainable Agriculture course to understand their curriculum adoption process and the relationship with their English department.
- Leadership within the state of California should look at providing agricultural instructors with professional development opportunities which promote acquisition of skills to teach literacy and writing in order to alleviate fear of the content and build collegial rapport with teachers of English.

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