Motivational Factors that Influenced Learner Participation in Supervised Agricultural Experience Programs

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Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) programs are an integral component of school-based agricultural education. However, student participation in SAE has continually decreased since the mid-1980s. Therefore, it was necessary to better understand factors that motivate students to participate in SAE programs. This led to the purpose of this qualitative study, which was to examine motivational factors that influence student participation in SAE. The researchers used the constant comparative analysis method to identify specific motivational factors that influenced SAE participation. The researchers found that participants were motivated by their family’s culture and traditions. Moreover, the student’s participation in the National FFA Organization (FFA), interaction with other FFA members, and recognition through SAE awards structure through FFA motivated students to engage in SAE. Further, the participants in this study were motivated by their personal satisfaction, interest, desire, and goals. The researchers also concluded that the agriculture teacher plays an important role in motivating students through conducting SAE supervision, building lasting relationships with students, and requiring student participation in SAE. Therefore, the researchers recommended that agriculture teachers continue to require every student to conduct an SAE and utilize all available resources to engage students in SAE.

Introduction and Literature Review

The development and implementation of Stimson’s (1919) home-project created a lasting impact on school-based agricultural education (SBAE) (Moore, 1988). Stimson (1919) believed learning must take place outside the classroom and must incorporate learning beyond observation of skills and tasks. Currently, in agricultural education, educators refer to the home project as a Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) programs (Phipps, Osborne, Dyer, & Ball, 2008). SAE has been an aspect unique to agricultural education and a way to create student context, conceptualization, and motivation toward a career in the agricultural industry (Phipps et al., 2008). However, SAE participation by students has been on a decline for decades (Barrick, Hughes, Baker, 1991; Dyer & Osborne, 1995; Kotrlik, Parton, & Leile, 1986; Miller, 1980; Newcomb et al., 2004; Retallick, 2010). Student motivation, changing demographics, student focus, and a lack of supervision have all been identified as factors for the decline in student participation (Barrick et al., 1991; Bird, Martin, & Simonsen, 2013; Dyer & Osborne, 1995; Retallick, 2010; Roberts & Harlin, 2007; Wilson & Moore, 2007).

In recent years, The National Council for Agricultural Education undertook an initiative to rejuvenate SAE in agricultural education programs nationwide (The Council, 2019). To effectively rejuvenate SAE, The Council convened a committee of teachers, state staff, and teacher educators to develop an updated definition of SAE and guiding principles for SAE program instruction/implementation (Barrick et al., 2011). Even with decreased participation, SAE has remained a vital component of the agricultural education program and model (Barrick et al., 2011; Phipps et al., 2008; The Council, 2019).

While the reasoning for student participation in SAE continues to be investigated, consideration and investigation into motivational factors of students that complete SAE
programs were worthy of investigation. Retallick (2010) reported the following five factors influence student participation in SAE programs: “(a) changing student demographics and societal attitudes, (b) mechanics and structure of schools, (c) resource availability, (d) image, and (e) agricultural education system” (p. 66). Investigation into motivational factors for participation, sustainment, and completion was worthy of investigation and may lead to identifying the reasons other students choose not to participate.

Researchers have reported throughout the literature base that SAE participation has a positive influence on student achievement, motivation, and future aspirations. Arrington and Cheek (1990) found a positive relationship existed between SAE scope and student achievement. Further, Lewis, Rayfield, and Moore (2012) found SAE impacted student performance and career aspirations. Similarly, SAE has been found to influence student intent and attitude toward teaching agriculture (Lawver & Torres, 2012).

Bird, Martin, & Simonsen (2013) reported that SAE historically was initially motivated through the utilization of extrinsic factors. The researchers purported that intrinsic motivators should be used to motivate student participation in SAE, following a student’s first year of participation. The researchers stated that the two most common intrinsic factors used to motive students were student-owned programs and student interest in the SAE topic area. Further, researchers have reported that the National FFA Awards and Degree programs serve as extrinsic motivators for student participation in SAE (Bird et al., 2013; Dyer and Williams, 1997; Leising & Zilbert, 1985; Retallick 2010; Wilson & Moore, 2007). However, a gap in the literature exists to find the commonality among students as to their motivational factors to implement and sustain their learning through their SAE. Therefore, this study aimed to examine factors that motivated the 2012 National FFA American Degree Star Candidates SAE involvement.

**Theoretical Framework**

In qualitative research, a theoretical framework should be identified following the analysis of the data. This allows for emergent themes from the data to help identify a supporting theory and decrease the opportunity for theoretical frames from guiding the coding process. The data in this study supported achievement motivation as the theoretical framework. Achievement motivation centralizes student perspectives that make them strive for competence in effortful activities (Elliot & Church, 1997). Nested within achievement motivation are expectancy-value, familial influences, personality, self-worth, and task involvement concepts (Schunk, 2012). Using achievement motivation as a conceptual frame for the phenomenon provided a basis to examine the factors that participants found to be motivational during their engagement in an SAE. Further, achievement motivation provides a foundation for investigation in which participants described factors contributing to their motivation and success in the National FFA Organization awards program.

**Ontological/Epistemological/Theoretical Perspectives**

Crotty (2010) defined an ontological perspective as the “what is” (p. 10) of a phenomenon being examined through a research study. This study used a realism ontological perspective to guide the study. Schwandt (1997, p. 133) stated, realism “is the doctrine that there
are real objects that exist independently of our knowledge of their existence.” Moreover, a realism ontological perspective stated that truth exists for an individual through independent realities from the real world (Mark, Henry, & Julnes, 2000). Research must examine an individual's interactions with the physical world through observations and thick description of the interactions (Turner, 2008). This ontological perspective was a strong fit with the researcher’s view of student’s individualized SAE programs. Students’ have an independent view and interaction with the project they have developed as a part of the world around them.

To better understand the participants’ view of the physical world, the researchers used a constructionism epistemological perspective. According to Guba and Lincoln (1990), every individual perceives the natural-physical world differently. Further, Patton (2002) stated that an individual’s reality “is not real in an absolute sense, as the sun is real, but is ‘made up’ and shaped by cultural and linguistic constructs” (p. 96). Therefore, Crotty (2010) posited that constructionists believe that an individual’s knowledge was constructed through interactions with their reality of the world.

A theoretical perspective was defined as “an elaboration … of the assumptions brought to the research task and reflected in the methodology as we understand and employ it” (Crotty, 2010, p. 7). In this study, a constructivism theoretical perspective guided the methods employed by the researchers. More specifically, constructivism refers to an individual’s meaning making process. Constructivists believe that meaning and knowledge was constructed rather than discovered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Crotty stated, “it is clear that different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon” (p. 9). Crotty (2010) purported that constructivists deny the existence of an objective reality. Therefore, an individual’s knowledge and meaning was based on personal experience and interactions with a given phenomenon. In this study, the researchers used the aforementioned ontological, epistemological, and theoretical perspectives to examine the motivational factors that influence student participation in SAE programs.

**Purpose and Research Question**

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that motivated American FFA Degree Star Finalists to conduct and engage in an SAE program. This study examined student engagement in meaningful SAE learning environments, supporting Priority Area 4 of the National Research Agenda (Roberts, Harder, & Brashears, 2016). The research question that guided the study was: what factors motivate SBAE students to engage and participate in SAE programs?

**Methods**

This study examined the motivational factors which influenced student participation and engagement in their SAE program. The researchers used qualitative methodology to collect and analyze participant responses to specific questions regarding their participation in SAE. Qualitative research has been defined as “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explores a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2013, p. 15). Within qualitative research face-to-face or observation data collection methods should be
used to further understand the examined phenomenon/individual within a natural setting (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010, p. 489). Within this study, the researchers used face-to-face focus groups to interact with agriculture students who have conducted SAE programs in SBAE.

The researchers in this study were formally trained in teacher education at the graduate level and completed an agriculture teacher preparation undergraduate program. Both researchers had experience instructing agricultural education at the secondary level and incorporated SAE programs into the agricultural education curriculum. Moreover, the researchers philosophically believe that SAE was an integral component of SBAE and that motivational factors influence student participation in SAE.

The participants in this study were 16 previous agriculture education students who were selected as the 2012 American FFA Degree Star Finalists. Participants were recruited to participate in the study by a written letter that was sent by the National FFA Organization. The National FFA Organization through specific selection criteria, established by the organization, purposively selected the American FFA Degree Finalists. During the review process, a panel of experts with expertise in SAE and agricultural education selected the 16 finalists.

This study used focus groups to determine the motivational factors that influenced student participation in SAE programs. Dooley (2007) posited, during the data collection process “most qualitative researchers are guided by a set of basic questions and issues to explore but deviations may occur to capture nuances and emerging trends not previously determined” (p.36). Therefore, the researchers developed semi-structured focus groups that guided the data collection process. Furthermore, when using a constructivist theoretical perspective, Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith, and Hayes (2009) deemed focus groups as an appropriate data collection methodology.

During the semi-structured focus groups, participants were asked to respond to various questions regarding factors that motivated them to participate in SAE programs during their SBAE courses. Specifically, participants were asked questions regarding individuals who influenced and provided motivation towards their engagement and participation in their SAE program. Furthermore, the focus group questions were reviewed and approved by a panel of agricultural education experts. Two separate focus groups were conducted at the same time with eight and seven participants. During the focus groups, the participants were asked to respond to a series of questions regarding their motivation to participate in an SAE program. Each focus group lasted between 65 and 75 minutes (Patton, 2002). Participants were provided the opportunity to utilize pseudonyms during the data collection process. During transcription every participant was assigned a pseudonym even if the participant used a pseudonym during the data collection process (Creswell, 2013; McMillian & Schumacher, 2010).

This study used Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) conceptualization of the constant comparative method, who described a process to remove the ground theory approach from this analysis method. Lincoln and Guba presented four steps that should be followed by researchers when utilizing the constant comparative analysis method. The four steps of the constant comparative analysis method include: 1. Create categories that were present in the data, 2. Redefine and combine the established categories or create subcategories, 3. Integrate categories
as they become more defined, and 4. Construct the written findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study did not attempt to develop a new theory, but utilize the analysis methods to ensure that a true comparison was made between each focus group in the study.

The focus group transcription manuscripts were reviewed three times to develop conceptual understanding of the data. During each review of the transcriptions, categories were established and redefined. Further, similar categories were combined to garner the motivational factors that influenced student participation in SAE programs.

To ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the study, the researchers ensured that the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research were upheld (Dooley, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To uphold the credibility of the findings, the researchers used member checking, peer debriefing, and persistent observations. Member checking was conducted at the conclusion of each focus group (Dooley, 2007). Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) stated that researchers should utilize peer debriefing to gain a fresh perspective during the data analysis process. Further, triangulation of the data was attained through the utilization of multiple focus groups, researcher’s observational notes, and multiple researchers involved in the data analysis process. The transferability of the data was upheld through the utilization of thick descriptions within the data of the context (Dooley, 2007). Therefore, readers of this study should examine the context and descriptions presented in the findings and conclusions of this study to determine if the findings can be transferred to their context or situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To uphold the dependability and confirmability of the research, the researchers used a methodological journal to document the methodological decisions made throughout the study (Dooley, 2007). At the conclusion of the data analysis, the researchers asked another qualitative expert to conduct a dependability and confirmability audit of the journals kept by the authors. The external reviewer found that all decisions upheld qualitative research norms and rigor to ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study.

The researchers noted the following limitations to the findings and conclusions of this study: (1) readers of this study must determine if the findings are applicable and can be transferred to their specific situation and context; (2) the participants in this study were not typical agricultural education students; therefore, the conclusions and results could be swayed; (3) while the data is aged the researchers believe this is a starting point to examine student motivation in SAE and could lead to additional examinations of student motivation.

**Findings**

The participants in this study graduated from high school between 2009 and 2011 and were 19 to 21 years of age. Eleven of the study participants were male and four were female (n = 15), one of the American FFA Degree Star Finalists opted to not participate in the study. Participants reported their post-secondary enrollment, of which, 3 were currently enrolled in an agriculture teacher preparation program. Furthermore, 13 of the participants were enrolled in some form of post-secondary education. The participants in this study represented each of the National FFA Regions and each SAE program type (entrepreneurship, placement, research, and exploratory). Finally, 13 of the participants reported that they had not served in a leadership
office above the chapter level. Two of the 13 participants who did not serve in a leadership office above the chapter level, never held an FFA leadership office. The following motivational factors emerged from the data analysis process: family, money, FFA, teacher, personal, and community.

**Family**

The participants believed that their families played a large role in motivating them to develop and conduct SAE programs. Ralph stated, his family “played a huge role I think in kind of the driving force of why I’m a farmer and a rancher.” Further, the participants believed family tradition and culture played a role in motiving their participation in SAE programs. Several of the participants discussed their relationships between their siblings, close family relatives, and their SAE programs. The participants stated that sibling rivalry was a substantial motivating factor that influenced their decision to participate in SAE programs. Tiffany stated,

… my oldest brother, he wasn’t really involved in FFA but sports wise and now he’s a professional bull fighter so ya he’s kinda he’s up there he’s a professional athlete. Well then my [other] brother being a national winner and everything and him going into like being a US Marshall well that just kinda sets the bar like for career wise. Hey you know I’ve gotta achieve something you know I can’t just be the low man on the totem pole. I’ve gotta set my reputation I’ve gotta hang with them.

Further, Bethany stated,

… I’m the oldest grandchild on my mom’s side of the family and I set the bar. That’s how it’s set. Also, the generation above me, my mom’s brother and sister, were very very involved in FFA and it’s all about beating my Uncle you gotta beat your uncle you gotta beat your aunt, you gotta set the bar high for the ten other kids that are coming in.

The participants discussed specific family members who supported them more than others. Some of the participants had developed strong relationships with retired agriculture teachers within the community. In one instance, the participant’s grandfather was a retired agriculture teacher. Amy stated, “my grandfather was an Ag teacher for 38 years … so he was the one who was helping me with my records and my organization and my thoughts and filling out the forms and getting the dates ready.”

Several times throughout the focus groups, the participants noted their parents as significant motivators towards their participation in SAE. Jared believed, “parents help you out a little bit and try to support you if you need help.” A few of the participants were engaged in SAE programs which were part of a family business. In those cases, the participants believed their family, more specifically their parents, was an essential component to their participation in an SAE program. Ryan indicated, “my parents played just as big a role as my advisor did. Just cause that was part of my family’s business, day in day out with them.”

Further Aaron said, “a big part of what I do is due to the fact that my parents were big supporters. My dad got me into showing animals by the time I was 3 and he’s kind of the one to push me into my Agribusiness.”
Money

Throughout the focus groups, it was evident the participants were motivated by the thought of making money from their SAE program. The participants believed that being able to demonstrate sound financial business standing was an essential component of a successful SAE program. Albert said,

… on the farm you gotta keep all your records for taxes and everything so, being if you’re not really good at then you probably gonna have something wrong so, if you start it early and get the practice in so if you make a mistake hopefully you make it before it really hurts you.

Further, the participants noted that the money they made would be used to fund their post-secondary education expenses. Carl stated, “… I wanted to make enough money to be able to buy a car and go to college.” Kyle further commented, “I wanted to be the best because it’s my livelihood and that’s how I’m gonna end up making my living in the future.” Moreover, the participants stated that to achieve some of their SAE goals financial backing was required. Albert noted, “one of my (SAE) goals was to be able to rent my own farm ground. In 2011, I was able to do that.” Finally, Aaron stated,

I think what helps motivate me the most is just seeing constant expansion. After we started selling it for a couple of years it was kind of slow but after that we really saw a huge jump and people really started getting interested and buying it. And, also, I’ve earned countless scholarships and prizes through which helped me attend college and get set for my future.

FFA

The study’s participants believed the National FFA Organization’s award system was an extrinsic motivator to participate in an SAE program. Furthermore, the recognition that the student received at the local, state, and national level was a motivational factor which influenced student participation in SAE. Ralph stated, “… the awards, I knew I wanted to be a farmer and a rancher beforehand. The awards were definitely a plus.” Further, the participants noted the National FFA award system encouraged them to expand and develop their SAE programs. Carl noted,

Once I got in and started competing I wanted to continue to grow my record books so I could compete in proficiencies with my record books at the state and national level. I will definitely say that the awards are a huge motivator, for if there were no awards then I probably would have just kept maintaining my crop production and just grow the sweet corn for the business aspect. But the awards for ag-entrepreneurship was what pursued me to want to grow my entrepreneurship business and then the awards to try to pursue state winning with my record book and then to become a national finalist was definitely what pursued me to continue to grow my books and my projects.
Bethany said,

I don’t think that without the awards that I would be where I am. Because yes, I could have done the projects, but I think I would have dragged it on further instead of like trying to find a different subject every year, a different project every year, I think I would have worked on the same project and explored every single detail in that project and so well it may have helped it there with the awards. I mean I - baseline I think awards helped me better because it made me more diverse.

Beyond the awards structure, the participants believed the National FFA Organization allowed them to meet and interact with other students who had similar interest. The participants noted their interactions with other FFA members motivated them to develop SAE goals which were specific to their interests and personal development. Aaron said,

FFA influenced my involvement. Mainly, just in putting me in the environment of thousands of other people who maybe came from not the same background but similar backgrounds and it’s a huge almost support group of people that have some of the same ideas, some of the same views all working toward a goal, whether it’s not the same goal just everybody working towards a goal to enhance agriculture in their own way.

Riley noted,

FFA has been a major part of what we have done, have started. I was fortunate enough to have an FFA chapter in middle school. And I joined FFA in 6th grade. When I went on to high school and they (members) started to push you a little more wanting to do pre-developments, SAE’s, proficiencies all sorts of things.

Brian explained, “FFA gave me being in competitions and giving me experience and let me do other stuff outside my comfort zone. I came to public school solely for the FFA and that has given me opportunities to branch out and made me who I am today.”

Teacher

Throughout the focus group, the participants shared that their agriculture teacher was involved in their SAE program. However, the teacher ranged from being the most important motivational factor to being more of a support-based entity. Nonetheless, participants noted the agriculture teacher as being a motivational factor for conducting an SAE program. Kyle stated, “if it weren’t for my ag teachers I definitely wouldn’t be sitting here right now. It was pretty much all contributed to getting started in this was mainly my ag teacher my freshman year in HS.” In some cases, the agriculture teacher may have been retired or retiring but continued to maintain a relationship with the student and their SAE program. The participants noted many times an agriculture teacher motivated their students without their knowledge. An agriculture teacher was able to build a firm relationship with their students and interact with students in meaningful ways that promote their involvement and participation in SAE. Derek said,
My ag teacher just had a way of motivating you without you knowing that he was motivating you, little subtle things. I don’t know if he just knew my personality well or what but um and then one thing that I see in my state and other advisors that I don’t see in him as much is that he just pushes for the what I call the fundamentals I guess of the SAE.

Bethany stated,

I heard one of his (ag teacher’s) past students say this the other day and I really have to agree with him. He said that my ag teacher has provided the opportunities and the framework for success and you need to go and fill that in with whatever you want and I really think that’s true because I can remember countless times that he said ‘Bethany we’re gonna take a weekend trip and we’re gonna go see this and you’re gonna see how you’re gonna like it’ he always provided me the opportunities.

Ryan added,

My ag teacher is always a real big supporter of anything that I wanted to do. I had known him ever since I was a baby. He was my dad’s ag advisor so we did have that in common. He always knew me on a personal note and he also knew me on my SAE as well and like you said if you had a question it would get found out. He knew enough people that it could get found out. If there was something going on and he could drive there then he’d be there to support you in all ways possible.

In addition, one participant noted his father’s agriculture teacher, who was not the participant’s agriculture teacher, still played a role in motivating this participant to engage in SAE. Aaron shared a “really big one (motivator) was my father’s Ag teacher has always been a pretty big part of my life. He’s still an ag teacher, he’s been teaching for over 30 years. He’s always been a big part of my life and we’ve always showed livestock together.”

Moreover, the participants noted they were required to complete an SAE program. Likewise, the student’s SAE program was required to have complete and accurate records. Many of the students explained this was one of the components the agriculture teacher motivated the student to complete. Derek stated, “basically with the records especially he really pushes all ag students in our school to make sure that we get records done and setting goals and he makes sure that you know that those are important early on.”

Finally, the participants noted the supervision they received from their agriculture teachers was a factor for them to continue to participate in SAE. The supervision the participants received occurred both in the classroom and on-site. Regardless of the location in which the supervision occurred, the participants noted the agriculture teacher’s supervision demonstrated their interest in the SAE program and the student. Ryan stated,

My advisor he’d show up all the time and just drop in. It’d be, he might come by two or three times in a week and then you might not seem him for a month you never could really tell, you just I mean he’d always be just out there taking pictures like he said, and
it’s always something going on that he could come and be a part of and just share in and taking pictures and documenting everything.

Riley stated,

My ag teacher supervised me both in the classroom and out in the field. We had leadership programs at school, production classes for ag and he would make sure that I was being the best student I could be as far as to learn to how to do an SAE how to do work in the industry and in the filed he would come out and just make sure that I was being the best employee for that company so I can make my SAE better and seeing that I had the best resources in the county for doing what I do to make sure that I was still being successful in everything I do.

Personal

One of the motivational factors the participant indicated was the concept of achieving personal satisfaction, interest, desire, and goals. The focus group participants expressed the importance of intrinsic factors in motivating their participation in SAE. Frank stated, “I’m gonna hit on the internal motivation. Absolutely, internal motivation needs to be a huge part because if you don’t wanna do it then you will never be successful.” Throughout the focus group, the participants mentioned the importance of personal goal setting that was directly related to their personal interest and desires. The participants noted when their personal goals were achieved they experienced personal satisfaction with their SAE program, which motivated them to continue their SAE program. Carl suggested, “more of the goals and the motivational drive came from myself.” Kyle said, “I set three goals and that was one of them was to get as much involved in the farming industry as I can. Two, be part of management and be a large portion of the management side of the operation and the 3rd be as profitable as I can.” Ryan suggested,

I just one day I want to take over the family business. Of course, it’s not going to happen yet, but one day it will so I made those goals long before I put SAE on paper. Because that was just always my dream to take over the family business.

While participants noted extrinsic factors motivated them to conduct an SAE program, some participants stated they hoped even without external motivators they would have continued to conduct their SAE. Susan stated,

The awards were definitely a push, but I hope to think that I would have done my research and continued to do that and even if I wasn’t in the agriscience fair it would have definitely been in the regular science fair. I was involved in that sort of environment and not about the recognition as much as it evolved into more of solving a problem and it is my problem that I want to solve

A few of the participants were involved in conducting SAE programs, involved with a family business or entity. These participants noted the term SAE was only given to them in their agricultural education courses and the projects they conducted had started prior to their involvement in SBAE. Aaron said, “I know personally, I just always shown, I didn’t think of it
as an SAE. Really my ag teacher just kind of put a name to it – SAE. I had already been doing this for a really long time.”

Community

The focus group participants believed the support they received from community members motivated them to continually participate in SAE programs. Participants noted simple messages and statements made by community members motivated them to continue their SAE. Further, these comments provided the participants with extrinsic motivational factors, which suggested that community members valued their SAE programs and the services the participants were providing. Jared said, “the communities, people if you work for them and then when you see them later you hear their neighbors say ‘oh that person did such a great job’ that kind of motivates you a little bit.” Ryan suggested, “people that see you see every week that you see them there and that’s it. They know you’re trying to get your business started so they try to help you out and give you words of encouragement and just boost you up.” Further, Kyle stated “…just from the community that I’m from, everyone is involved in farming one way or another just about I got a lot of encouragement from people, like from all the community. Like salesman, serviceman, other farmers, ag teachers.”

Conclusions/Recommendations/Implications-to-Practice

The participants in this study were not deemed to be average agricultural education students; therefore, readers of this study must determine if the findings and conclusions are applicable to their context and situation. Further, this study supports previous literature that both extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors should be used to influence student participation in SAE programs (Bird et al., 2013). The participants discussion of their motivations in regards to their SAE program was a direct indicator of the tenants of achievement motivation (Schunk, 2012). Throughout the study each of the participants noted various factors that motivated them to improve, adapt, and overcome many obstacles. Due to their motivation factors, the participants were able to achieve their dreams by becoming an American FFA Degree Star Finalist. Achievement motivation was played out in each of their programs through their programmatic decisions, various individuals who supported them, and the products or outcomes that were developed through their SAE involvement. Agriculture teachers and teacher educators must continue to ensure that achievement motivation is used in the development and implementation of SAE programs to help students remain motivated. Additionally, teacher educators should provide professional development sessions on achievement motivation for in-service teachers. Further research should examine current students’ motivation to engage in SAE programs to determine if changing student populations have different or similar motivations for participation.

First, the participants’ families played a large role in motivating the student to continue and participate in SAE. The families established culture and traditions were provided as evidence of the families’ motivational influence on the student’s involvement in SAE. Further, this was influenced by the families past history of involvement in SBAE, the National FFA Organization, and SAE programs. Therefore, it was recommended that families remain involved in the SAE program throughout the development, implementation, and sustainment phases. Furthermore, the researchers recommend that families be introduced to the concept of SAE prior to the
development of a student’s SAE program. An implication-for-practice exists for agriculture teachers to provide this information to families through a variety of communication channels including: parent/teacher conferences, meet-the-teacher/back-to-school events, on-site supervisory visits, and through written letters/information guides. Further, agriculture teachers should utilize graduates and upperclassman experiences to provide SAE program examples to students and their families during the SAE development process. Finally, this leads to two recommendations for research: (1) to examine the roles of different family member groups (parents, siblings, aunt/uncles, grandparents) on student motivation to participate in SAE, regardless of the families past experience with SBAE and SAE; and (2) to further examine the influence that achievement motivation, conditioning theory, drive theory, social comparison, expectancy-value theory, and goals/expectations have on SAE program development, implementation, and sustainment. As achievement motivation was used as a theoretical lens for this investigation, additional theories and perspectives from participants describe intertwined motivational factors leading to their success in SAE.

Second, the researchers concluded that money and personal satisfaction were two large motivational factors that influenced student SAE participation. When developing and implementing SAE programs, students should work with their agriculture teacher and establish long-range goals that guide the SAE program. As the student’s achieve their established goals, the student was able to determine if monetary and personal gains were made, which influences their personal satisfaction towards their SAE program. Personal satisfaction can also be achieved through interaction with community members. The comments made to students by community members can increase a student’s level of personal satisfaction in their SAE program. Furthermore, the monetary gains that students achieved through their SAE programs provided the financial support to achieve personal goals that were established outside of their SAE, such as: post-secondary education and personal items. It was recommended that during the SAE development process that the student establishes attainable and relevant SAE goals, as a form of intrinsic motivation for SAE participation (Bird et al., 2013). Further, the researchers recommend that students keep records of their financial decisions to assist in determining if financial gains were made from their SAE programs. Finally, agriculture teachers should encourage students to celebrate when an established goal or monetary gain was achieved. This led the researchers to recommend the following two recommendations for research: (1) further examination of the role of personal satisfaction as a motivational factor towards SAE participation and (2) further examination of community member’s involvement and role in SAE program development and implementation.

The third conclusion made by the researchers was that participation in the National FFA Organization served as a motivational factor for student involvement in SAE (Leising & Zilbert, 1985). The National FFA Organization provided the participants with opportunities to develop personal skills though interacting with other’s that had similar interests. Further, the National FFA Awards Program provided students with the ability to be recognized for the work that they had completed through their SAE program. The researchers noted that the participants discussed the awards program as a reward for their hard work in their SAE. The researchers recommend that the National FFA Awards system should be used as an award that recognizes a student’s hard work in their SAE program rather than the entire purpose to conduct an SAE program. Further, it was recommended that the National FFA Organization continue to ensure that
student’s hard work and SAE accomplishment be recognized. Therefore, preservice teacher education programs should ensure that preservice and inservice teachers recognize the role of the National FFA Awards System as a motivational factor in SAE participation. The researchers recommend that research should examine the role of the current National FFA Awards System in SBAE, specifically SAE.

The final conclusion agreed upon by the researchers was that agriculture teachers were a motivational factor that influences a student’s decision to participate in an SAE program, differing slightly from previous work which stated the agriculture teacher was the most important factor (Dyer & Osborne, 1995; Osborne, 1988; Swortzel, 1996). The researchers concluded that agriculture teachers provided students with a mixture of on-site and classroom supervision practices. Agriculture teachers have the ability to develop lasting and meaningful relationships with students that influence SAE participation. In this study, the agriculture teachers required each the participant to conduct an SAE program during their SBAE courses. The researchers recommend that agriculture teachers develop meaningful relationships with students in their SBAE classrooms. Moreover, it was recommended that agriculture teachers require every SBAE student to conduct an SAE program during their agricultural education courses. To ensure that engagement by all students was achieved, agriculture teachers should utilize all available resources to assist students in identifying their interests within the agricultural industry. Finally, the researchers recommend the following research recommendations: (1) examination of current practicing teachers SAE instructional practices; (2) examination of motivational theories that influence student SAE participation; and (3) examine the role of classroom instruction & supervision practices (classroom and on-site) on student motivation to participate in SAE.
References


