

Looking Back to Move Forward: A Compendium of SAE Literature (1912-2018)

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Introduction: Need for Idea

As humans, we often find ourselves focusing on the present and losing sight of the historical context that can guide us forward. Agricultural Education bears a long and storied tradition of encouraging involvement in Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) projects. Despite our traditions, present-day educators may have little research and historical context on which to continue the development of SAE-type programs. The intent of our innovation is to capture, catalogue, and share a database of research to propel the continued development of what we currently call SAEs.

As early as 1825, formalized instruction in agriculture was offered at the university level, and with the passage of the 1862 Morrill Land Grant Act, universities began to experience the beginning stages of formalized agriculture education (True, 1929). By 1912, efforts built a case around the *project method* of teaching in agriculture (Stimson, 1912). The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 furthered the *project method* implemented at the Smith Agricultural School by providing federal aid for the implementation of vocational education at the secondary level (True, 1929). While starting as the *project method*, throughout the years we have adopted different terminology. In this innovation, we will utilize the term “experiential component” (EC) as a reference to synthesize the many descriptors for the SAE-type component of agricultural education.

Despite a long tradition of experience in agriculture and agricultural education, the tenets regarding SAE come from a variety of perspectives. EC research themes have cycled from planning, garnering and sustaining student investment, record keeping, factors inhibiting participation, motivation, and skill attainment with each evolution of the EC (i.e. Supervised Farm/Home Project, Supervised Occupational Experience, and Supervised Agricultural Experience). Decades of recurring themes have yielded recommendations relative to individual refrains, but these recommendations do not often present in terms of the multiple facets of the EC. The cyclical nature of literature trends indicates the need to work toward a unified venture to support the holistic benefit of present day SAE research and practice. This innovation captures a vast body of literature, providing the scope and timeline for the EC from inception to current day to allow agricultural education to make concerted efforts toward a unified voice regarding the EC.

Methodology: How it Works

This innovation frames the current and historical trends in the EC research through the compilation of journal and research trends. Historical context advances through the assembling of over 700 publications related to supervision, experience, experiential learning, and farming within agricultural education. The original innovation started with approximately 80 titles related to the experiential component of agricultural education, compiled from a Boolean search for “Supervised Agricultural Experience.” Additional searches cross-referenced reference sections from the original 80 papers until we reached near saturation. Further search criteria included “Supervised Farm Practice,” “Supervised Occupational Experience,” “Supervised Agricultural Experience,” “Experiential Learning,” “Agricultural Education Proficiency,” and “Agricultural Education Degree.” Publications range from Acts of Congress to bulletins, periodicals (namely, The Ag Ed Magazine), journal articles, theses, and dissertations. Specific journal searches included the Journal of Agricultural Education (formerly the Journal for the Association of Agricultural Educators) and the Journal of Experiential Learning. Compilation of

Poster Abstract: Innovative Idea

literature trends derived through key ideas conveyed solely in titles, providing a limitation of the innovation, as titles do not always convey the full purpose and substance of the publication. However, this approach offered the most representative review to begin identifying the trends in research and key researchers who have contributed to the theoretical and conceptual development of the EC over the last 100 years. This innovation aligns with AAAE Research Priority 4, Question 3: “How can delivery of educational programs in agriculture continually evolve to meet the needs and interests of students?” (Roberts, Harder, & Brashears, 2016).

Results to Date: Implications

Thus far, over 700 publications (1912-2018) have been cataloged, hyperlinked and sorted by year, author, title, states represented, phase of EC (Supervised Farm Project, Supervised Occupational Experience, and Supervised Agricultural Experience), decade, and publication type, as well as keyword (record keeping, supervision, enrollment trends, student/teacher/stakeholder perceptions, benefits, assessment, etc.). The compendium currently exists in the form of a shareable and indexed Google Sheet.

The further development and dissemination of the Compendium of SAE Literature holds two primary implications for the profession. First, the catalog provides a database of research regarding trends in the EC. Second, it provides a common site for voices and facets to come together congruently regarding the history, but more importantly, further development of Supervised Agricultural Experiences. Currently, one of the challenges facing SAE is the variety of facets from which it is researched. With this in mind, our innovation is a step towards forming a more unified venture surrounding SAE and its future in school based agricultural education.

Future Plans: Advice to Others

As additional publications become available, they will continue to be added to the compendium. This reference source will provide greater depth in review and perspective for researchers with lines of inquiry around experiential learning and the EC. By offering a common, summarized, and single research base, the field will be better equipped to identify gaps and opportunities in addition to formulating a cohesive line of inquiry for SAE research and practice. For the benefit of agricultural education, this resource should be available for researchers and practitioners across the profession, but especially to scholars with foci around experiential learning and the EC.

Costs: Resources Needed

While this resource cost time to produce, no additional input costs were necessary. As we move forward, we are seeking collaborators to enhance the depth and breadth of identified SAE research. If a more comprehensive compendium is to be developed, summaries from original authors (as available) would enhance the database, allowing our profession to move toward a more complete and informed perspective on the historical development and future possibilities of Supervised Agricultural Experiences.

References

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