The Awareness and Implementation of the SAE for All Framework in Kansas

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Introduction

Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) programs have been an important component of the 3-part agricultural education model since Rufus Stimson's work in the 1940s. Most agricultural educators believe all students should have a SAE program (Rank & Retallick, 2017). Several types of SAE programs exist including placement, entrepreneurship and research.

In 2017, the National Council for Agricultural Education introduced new types of SAE programs through the *SAE for All* framework (2017). The change is intended to increase student involvement in SAE programs and allow every student to develop a quality SAE. Kansas is one of the first states to adopt the *SAE for All* framework. Research on this topic is warranted in an effort to determine how the guide is being utilized and the amount/type of teacher professional development needed to increase the impact of the new framework. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the awareness and implementation of the *SAE for All* framework in Kanssas in an effort to influence the success of the new model.

Conceptual Framework

Lange, Kruglanski, and Higgins (2012) state that human behavior is performed rationally from the information available. Humans make decisions on what they believe they can get out of it (Skinner, 1938). Agriculture teacher's use of the information they may, or may not, have could influence their implementation of the *SAE for All* framework.

Methodology

This study investigated teachers' implementation of and recommendations for improvement of the *SAE for All* framework. Three research questions were developed to guide the study. RQ1. How many teachers in the state are aware of the *SAE for All* framework? RQ2. How do teachers plan on implementing the framework into their classrooms? RQ3. What advice do teachers have for improvements of the *SAE for All* framework? An instrument specific to agricultural education in Kansas was developed which consisted of 18 multiple choice and short answer questions. Content validity was established by content experts prior to distributing the Qualtrics-hosted survey via email. Dillman's Tailored Design Method (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014) was used to maximize survey response rates (Rosenbaum & Lidz, 2007). Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Results

After a three-week data collection period, 73 Kansas agriculture teachers (N = 238) had completed the survey (31% response rate). There was almost an even split in gender with 47% male (n = 34) and 53% female (n = 39).

The first research question sought to measure the awareness of the *SAE for All* framework in Kansas. Only 58% (n = 41) of the respondents were aware of the *SAE for All* framework with 16 indicating they "maybe" were aware. Teachers who indicated they were aware or might be aware of the framework (n = 57) were asked additional questions. Therefore, the percentages are reflective of only the 57 teachers who were aware of the *SAE for All* Framework and does not include the 12 who were not aware. From the 57, only nine teachers (16%) attended the SAE

Summit in August 2017 with an additional 16 (n = 28%) participating in the SAE Summit in January 2018.

Research question two investigated how teachers plan to implement the framework. Almost all of the respondents (91%, *n* = 50) agree that the framework can be helpful in their classroom. Eighty percent (*n* = 44) of teachers agreed that the framework allows projects to be more personalized. Seventy-four percent (*n* = 40) of teachers believe that the student and adviser guides are both helpful tools. Teachers indicated they still would like to receive additional training on the SAE for All framework with 66% (n = 36) indicating they still have questions and recommend another SAE Summit to learn more about the new model.

The final research question asked teachers to provide advice for improving the implementation and use of the framework. Only 25 teachers attended educational training provided by the Kansas Department of Education and Kansas FFA focused on the new framework. When asked about resource format, 74% of respondents (*n* = 40) would like it to be made available in additional formats such as PowerPoint slides, videos, and an interactive mobile app.

Conclusions

The results of this exploratory survey help to justify further training opportunities and support for teachers as they implement the new framework. The demographic makeup of the respondents is representative of Kansas agriculture teachers, young teachers, single programs, and almost evenly split by gender.

While there were a large number of teachers who were aware or slightly aware of the new framework, there were others who were not aware (17%, n = 12). This is a sign that the promotion of the *SAE for All* framework was not permeating the consciousness of all the state's agriculture teachers. Increasing the number of teachers who are aware and receive training to implement the *SAE for All* framework could help increase the implementation (Lange, Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2012).

Of the teachers who were aware of the framework, the majority of them had not attended either of the SAE summits offered in the 2017-2018 school year. The vast majority of teachers found the SAE for All framework and curriculum as helpful, but they requested additional training on how to implement.

Implications

As Kansas continues to implement the *SAE for All* framework, results from this study should be shared with Team Ag Ed, which includes the State FFA Advisor, Executive Secretary, university agricultural education staff, and current agriculture teachers.

Further research is warranted to see how well the state is using this framework and continue to answer teachers' questions. Research on the impact of this new framework on quantity and quality of newly developed SAEs and the type of SAEs being carried out is also needed. A longitudinal study to follow students through their educational career to see if their SAE program, using the new framework, led to an increase in collegiate agriculture students, graduates, and eventually agricultural professionals.

Results of this research and the efforts taken in Kansas can serve as an example of how to get teachers aware, trained, and eager to implement the *SAE for All* framework across the country.

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