



Defining Programmatic Balance: A Modified Delphi Study



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Introduction and Purpose

- The three components of SBAE programs are represented by three equal and overlapping circles and providing a balance of the three components is recommended by some organizations (GA-DOE, 2017; NC-DPI, nd).
- Despite its use, what defines a balanced program or “programmatically balanced” is not included in the literature.
- The purpose of this study was to fill the gap in the literature and propose a research-based definition of programmatic balance.

Theoretical Framework

- Theory of Planned Behavior underpinned this study (Ajzen, 1991; 2006).
- There is a chronic shortage of SBAE teachers (Kantrovich, 2007) and multiple studies on teacher hours, work-life balance, and impact of the imbalance on career longevity. (Sorenson, McKim & Velez, 2016; Hainline, Ulmer, Ritz, Burris, Gibson, 2015; Murray, Flowers, Croom & Wilson, 2011).
- Developing balanced programs is incongruent with possible outcomes within TPB if the term is not defined and part of the lexicon.

Methods

- A modified, three-round Delphi method was used with an open-ended, generative round with two subsequent quantitative rounds.
- Panel consisted of all members on the List-Serve of the National Association for Supervisors of Agricultural Education.
- Consensus was defined as mean agreement score of 5+ or 83% of respondents agreeing on a 1-6 Likert-type scale.

A Balanced SBAE Program Is One Where

The classroom is the foundation of the program, driven by the needs of the community and the interest of the students, and includes field, laboratory or shop activities.

Equal importance is placed on FFA and SAE engagement for all students and where those (FFA and SAE) opportunities are relevant to the students, build from what is taught, and evidence of activities are included in the overall performance evaluation of the student.

Leadership and career development are not exclusive to formal FFA functions and opportunities exist in the classroom, lab, and in community.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- There is very little consistency in agricultural education’s use of Delphi methods regarding scales and consensus levels.
- Further research and discussions are required to examine the implications of consensus, its meanings, and use.

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Findings

The following statements met consensus:

- Student SAE projects should be based on what the student is interested in and not just what is easiest for the advisor or school.
- There needs to be evidence recorded of student work-based learning.
- Classroom instruction should include field or laboratory/shop components.
- Personal and leadership development can be developed in many ways including the classroom, shop, or through community engagement.
- Programs are seen as “successful” if they have proficiency winners, frequent state officers, or numerous fair/show projects each year, but a truly successful program is where students are enrolled in agricultural education courses each year, have SAE projects that they work on outside of class, and are involved in the FFA at least at the local level.
- Placing equal importance to classroom instruction, FFA, and SAE is essential to having a successful agricultural education program.
- Instruction needs to be relevant to the student and the needs of the community.
- Teachers should not just teach the “contest kids”. If there is not value in teaching the concepts of the CDE to all students, perhaps the CDE is irrelevant.
- The goals and balance of the program should be based on input from the community.
- FFA and SAE Programs should grow out of what is taught in the classroom.
- A portion of the student’s grade should be based on FFA involvement and completing and SAE project.
- The classroom is where it all starts. Without which, the other two circles don’t exist.
- The classroom is the foundation of the other two elements. SAE programs should be built on what has been presented in class and the interests of students. FFA is used to support the other two areas.
- Too many programs try to build it backwards and create a strong FFA first, when the classroom focus should be the priority.