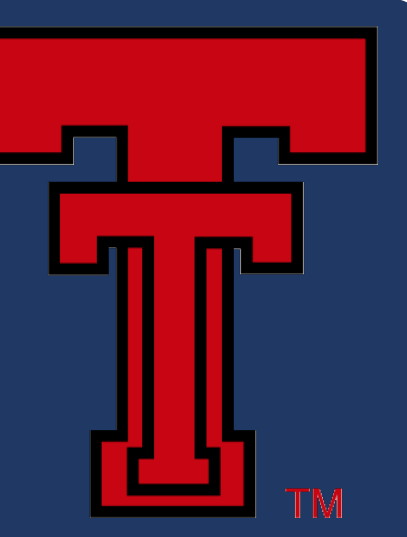


# SAE and Me



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## Introduction and Purpose

- SAEs are a critical component of agricultural education (Smith & Rayfield, 2016).
- The lack of SAE implementation has been a problem documented in agricultural education for many years (Dyer & Osborne, 1995; Retallick, 2010; Steele, 1997; Wilson & Moore, 2007).
- Causes for low SAE participation include: A lack of SAE knowledge by both the teacher and student, lack of student motivation to participate in SAEs, and a shortage of teacher time to supervise SAEs (Lewis, Rayfield, & Moore, 2012; Osborne, 1988; Steele, 1997; Wilson & Moore, 2007).
- A wealth of quantitative research has been done in this area to determine why SAE participation is lacking, however very little qualitative work has been done.
- The purpose of this study was to conduct an in-depth interview with a person who had an SAE in the past to identify factors that negatively impacted his/her experience.

## Theoretical Framework

- SAEs are commonly examined through experiential learning theory (ELT).
- ELT is the combination of work from several researchers.
- ELT requires the learner to take part in a meaningful experience, reflect on the experience, and apply the knowledge gained to new situations (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984).
- In order to gain a better understanding for why there continues to be a lack of SAE participation, qualitative efforts must be made to go beyond what quantitative research has been able to provide (Lewis, Rayfield, & Moore, 2012).

## Methodology

- A qualitative, case study research approach was used to address the purpose of this study.
- A case study is an in-depth examination of a particular case, individual, or program, and can be limited to a situation (Lichtman, 2014).
- Semi-structured meta interview techniques were used for data collection because the relationship between the researcher and the interviewee affects the data (Lichtman, 2014).
- For the sake of anonymity, the interviewee will be referred to as Daniel.
- The interviewee was selected because he had an SAE for the entirety of high school.
- Credibility was established through analyst triangulation where multiple analysts were used to interpret the data.
- An external audit was conducted by an expert in SAE research at Texas Tech University to establish dependability of the research methods in this study.
- Multiple researchers were involved in the design and data interpretation of this study to facilitate a reflexive research design, adding confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## Findings

### Theme 1: Lack of Student SAE Knowledge

“What barriers did you have with participation in an SAE in high school?”  
 Daniel: “For the longest time, I never even knew I had an SAE. I started agriculture class and being involved with FFA in eighth grade. It wasn’t until I was a junior that I realized I even had one when my teacher said I should fill out a state degree application.”

### Theme 2: Lack of Teacher Supervision Time

Daniel: “Once my teacher and I had the conversation about what SAEs were, she wanted to come see my operation, but she never did come.”

### Theme 3: Lack of Student Resources

“What were some personal barriers you had for participating in your SAE?”  
 Daniel: “Well I also wanted to show cattle, but I was stuck on a fish farm and doing fish stuff because that’s what my parents did. I told them I really wanted to show cattle, but they said we can’t afford to do that, and I needed to stay in school.”

### Theme 4: Lack of Student Motivation

Daniel: “I really had no motivation to have an SAE. It wasn’t really talked about in ag class and I just happened to have one because I lived on a farm. It certainly wasn’t a requirement for class, but hey, I got my American Farmer degree, so I guess it all worked out!”

## Conclusions

- The SAE for All initiative stresses the importance of an individualized SAE project (National Council for Agricultural Education, 2007).
- A good relationship between the agricultural education teacher and the student must be established with particular detail given to SAE.
- This study gives rich detail as to how these barriers came to be with Daniel.
- Themes of this study support the findings of previous studies in the quantitative realms in the areas of lack of student knowledge, lack of teacher time for supervision, and a lack of student motivation to participate (Lewis, Rayfield, & Moore, 2012; Osborne, 1988; Steele, 1997; Wilson & Moore, 2007).

## Recommendations

- Agricultural education teachers should always teach their students about SAEs in the classroom.
- Make SAEs a course requirement to gain student participation.
- The case study should be expanded to include several students who had successful SAE experiences and determine what made the experiences positive.
- Conduct more rigorous quantitative research examining the current levels of SAE participation and determining what barriers exist for those not participating in SAEs and how to mitigate them.

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