

**Tasks Associated with Teaching
School-Based Agricultural Education**

Ryan W. Best
Dr. J. Shane Robinson
Dr. Robert Terry, Jr.
Dr. M. Craig Edwards
Dr. Ki L. Cole

Oklahoma State University
459 Agricultural Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078
(254) 459-9221
ryan.best@okstate.edu

Introduction/Need for Study

School-based agricultural education (SBAE) teachers experience heavy workloads (Torres et al., 2008), challenges (Boone & Boone, 2009), and needs (DiBenedetto et al., 2018; Traini et al., 2021). Moreover, the expectations required of SBAE teachers are ever changing (Eck et al., 2019), which can cause strain (Traini et al., 2021) and lead to stress and burnout (Croom, 2003).

Research indicates that *general* tasks associated with teaching SBAE, such as excessive paperwork, working overtime, meeting deadlines, and insufficient personal time, can be sources of stress for teachers (Torres et al., 2009). However, determining the *specific* tasks required of SBAE teachers is a difficult undertaking. Although the tasks of teaching SBAE can be inferred from the above-mentioned professional needs, challenges, and characteristics, limited literature exists detailing the specific tasks SBAE teachers are expected to perform. Therefore, this study sought to identify the specific tasks expected of SBAE teachers within the classroom and laboratory, FFA, SAE, as well as *other* professional responsibilities associated with teaching.

Theoretical Framework

The topics of interest for this study are the tasks SBAE teachers are expected to complete, either intrinsically or extrinsically. Gardner (1985) defined tasks as “a body of work requiring mental and/or physical activity” (p. 346). Tasks are central to a multitude of motivational theories (de Brabrand & Martens, 2014; Gardner, 1985; Schunk et al., 2014) such as the Expectancy Value Theory (EVT). EVT hinges on two main variables, expectancies and values as they relate to an individual’s beliefs about their ability to carry out a task and the value they place on that task (Schunk et al., 2014). Wigfield & Eccles (2000) posited “individuals’ choice, persistence and performance can be explained by their beliefs about how well they will do on the activity and the extent to which they value the activity” (p. 68).

Methodology

A modified, three-round Delphi method was used to meet the objectives of the study. The panelists consisted of doctoral students in agricultural education with at least three years of SBAE teaching experience. An email was sent to department heads at the 22 universities that offer a doctoral program in agricultural education requesting the names and email addresses of agricultural education doctoral students enrolled in their programs. Thirteen (59%) responded and provided 40 potential Delphi panelists who met the criteria. Of those, 23 (58%) responded to Round 1, 22 (55%) responded to Round 2, and 20 (50%) responded to Round 3. Because 13 are needed to establish a reliability coefficient of .90 (Dalkey et al., 1972), the study can be assumed reliable. Prior to its submission to panelists, the instrument was assessed for face and content validity by members of the Agricultural Education department at Oklahoma State University, and slight modifications were made.

The initial email was sent to panelists describing the study and directing them to a Qualtrics link to the Round 1 instrument on September 29, 2022. The instrument included the following four open-ended questions: 1) What tasks are associated with the roles and responsibilities of an SBAE teacher regarding classroom and laboratory instruction in a typical year?; 2) What tasks are associated with the roles and responsibilities of an SBAE teacher regarding FFA advisement in a typical year?; 3) What tasks are associated with the roles and responsibilities of an SBAE

teacher regarding supervised agricultural experiences (SAEs) in a typical year?; and 4) What other tasks are associated with the roles and responsibilities of an SBAE teacher in a typical year (aside from classroom/laboratory instruction, FFA, and SAE)? For each round of the study, a reminder email was sent to potential panelists approximately one week following the initial email for the round per Dillman's et al. (2014) tailored design method. Responses to the open-ended questions in Round 1 were analyzed using the constant comparison method (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Duplicated responses were grouped into a single task descriptive of the responses, and the resulting unduplicated tasks were arranged into themes.

In Round 2, panelists were asked to rate the tasks on a four-point agreement scale. An 80% level of agreement was chosen *a priori* to determine consensus of agreement. Items achieving the threshold were included in the final list of tasks of SBAE teachers. However, items achieving 51.00% to 79.99% level of agreement were included in Round 3 through an additional Qualtrics link where panelists were asked whether the task should be included as an expectation for SBAE teachers (1 = *No*, 2 = *Yes*) and why. Tasks achieving 80% level of agreement were considered to have reached consensus and were included in the final list of tasks of SBAE teachers.

Results/Findings

Initial results for Round 1 yielded 865 original tasks and 54 themes across the four areas. After analysis, 348 unduplicated tasks were identified. Classroom and laboratory instruction produced 84 tasks across 14 themes, FFA produced 99 tasks across 13 themes, SAE produced 80 tasks across 12 themes, and other professional responsibilities produced 85 tasks across 15 themes.

The final list of tasks associated with teaching SBAE included 238 items achieving consensus in 48 themes across the four question areas (216 tasks reached the consensus of agreement threshold in Round 2, and an additional 22 tasks achieved consensus of agreement in Round 3). In total, 74 tasks populated classroom and laboratory instruction, 80 tasks populated FFA, 45 tasks populated SAE, and 39 tasks populated *other professional responsibilities*. In all, 110 tasks and six themes failed to reach consensus of agreement and were dropped from the study.

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

It can be concluded that the tasks expected of SBAE teachers are plentiful and widely varied and demonstrate the breadth and depth of the responsibilities of SBAE teachers as they relate to each of the three components of the three-circle model as well as other professional responsibilities as designated by the local school district. It is apparent based on these findings that teachers are expected to complete an overwhelming number of tasks related to their role as SBAE instructors.

Although this study uncovered the expectancies related to tasks, additional research should assess the value teachers have for completing them (Schunk et al., 2014; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Currently, the tasks expected of SBAE teachers are vast and demanding (Torres et al., 2008). Consequently, as workload increases, it can be reasonably inferred that pressures on SBAE teachers to manage these tasks could potentially lead to stress and burnout and might be the cause for teachers leaving the profession altogether. Additional research should conduct a factor analysis of these findings to make the tasks more manageable for SBAE teachers.

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