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Student Teacher Activities—Are They Relevant? The University Supervisor's Perspective

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Abstract

The traditional student teaching experience includes a complex, triadic relationship between student teacher, cooperating teacher, and the university supervisor. Studies seeking to understand this experience from the perspectives of the student teacher and cooperating teacher are commonly found in the literature; yet research specific to the university supervisor has been considered meager at best. Building upon Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior, we sought to reveal the university supervisor's voice regarding the relevance of traditionally required student teaching skills and activities commonly included in the capstone student teaching experience. A descriptive census study consisting of university supervisors (N = 62) from the North Central Region of the American Association for Agricultural Education (AAAE) was implemented. A document analysis of agricultural education student teaching handbooks from the North Central AAAE region provided the foundation for a researcher-developed, expert-panel validated instrument consisting of student teaching skills and activities organized into eight constructs. University supervisors considered seven of the eight constructs as very relevant for inclusion in the capstone student teaching experience. We conclude that university supervisors in the North Central Region of AAAE perceive activities and skills commonly required of student teachers as important to the capstone student teaching experience. Future activities should be aligned with those included in national performance-based, subject-specific assessments commonly being adopted by teacher preparation programs. Future research should seek to determine alignment of best practices in SBAE national standards-based assessments.

Keywords: student teacher, university supervisor, relevant student teaching activities

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Introduction

The importance of the student teaching experience is hard to ignore. Identified as "a central component of virtually all preservice teacher education programs" (Borko & Mayfield, 1995, p. 502), this well-documented capstone experience (Edgar, Roberts, & Murphy, 2009; Smalley, Retallick, & Paulsen, 2015a) provides preservice teacher candidates with the opportunity to connect theory with practice (Cuenca, Schmeichel, Butler, Dinkelman, & Nichols, 2011; Retallick & Miller, 2007). Considered "the single most influential factor in…teacher education programs" (Steadman & Brown, 2011, p. 51) its' power has been described as "legend" (Valencia, Martin, Place & Grossman, 2009, p. 304).

The traditional student teaching experience includes a complex, triadic relationship between student teacher, cooperating teacher, and the university supervisor (Slick, 1997). Studies seeking to understand this experience from the viewpoint of the student teacher are plentiful (Ezer,

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Gilat, & Sagree, 2011; Krysher, Robinson, Montgomery, & Edwards, 2012; Rubenstein, Thoron, & Estepp, 2014; Smalley, Retallick, & Paulsen, 2015; Stripling, Thoron, & Estepp, 2014; Tarman, 2012; Thieman, Marx, & Kitchel, 2014; Young & Edwards, 2006). Research relating specifically to the student teacher's relationship with the cooperating teacher (Jones, Kelsey, & Brown, 2014; Kasperbauer & Roberts, 2007; Martin, 1997; Stoddart, 1990; Thobega & Miller, 2008) and the perspective of the cooperating teacher (Anderson, 2007; Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Clark, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2014) are commonly found in the literature. Much research has examined student teaching from individual triadic perspectives (Valencia, et al., 2009), yet not all perspectives of the student teaching experience have been well-documented (Slick, 1997); research specific to the university supervisor has been considered meager at best (Steadman & Brown, 2011).

In addition to the primary responsibility of planning and ultimately evaluating the preservice teacher (Valencia et al., 2007), university supervisors can have a positive effect on student teacher performance (Grossman et al., 2011; Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012), and provide a significant contribution to the student teaching experience (Slick, 1997). Therefore, it is surprising that a great deal "remains unknown about the influence of university supervisor" (Borko & Mayfield, 1995).

"What we learn from studying the process of learning to teach depends on whose voices are being heard" (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998, p. 156). Following the recommendations of Harlin, Edwards, and Briers (2002), Smalley, Retallick, and Paulsen (2015a, 2015b) examined the relevance of student teaching practices from the perspective of the student teacher and cooperating teacher; yet the voice of the university supervisor has remained essentially silent. The intent of this study was to seek this triadic member's perspective.

Theoretical Framework

Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provided the foundation for this study. Defined as "a major framework for understanding, predicting, and changing human social behavior" (Ajzen, 2012, p. 438), TPB frames the relationship between the antecedents of intention and its relationship to behavior. Intention is considered a central component of TPB. "Intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behavior…they are indications of how hard people are willing to try…in order to perform the behavior" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 181). Shaped by attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, intention encapsulates motivational factors which influence a given behavior. Conner and Armitage (1998) suggested that "attitudes toward a specific behavior exert their impact on behavior via intentions" (p. 1430).

In this study we operationalize the three determinants of intention in TPB: attitude as the university supervisors' perception of the relevance of student teacher capstone skills and activities, identified by peers in the [Region] of AAAE (subjective norm), over which they have academic or curricular control (perceived behavior control). We consider a primary focus on attitude as a precursor of intention. Ajzen (1991) suggested that "attitudes toward the various behaviors made significant contributions to the prediction of intentions" (p. 189) and that personal consideration usually outweighs the impact of social norms. Since university supervisors are responsible for planning and ultimately evaluating the student teaching experience (Valencia et al., 2007) it is important that their perceptions regarding the relevance of student teacher activities are identified.

Building upon the Theory of Planned Behavior, the purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which university supervisors deemed traditionally required student teaching skills and activities relevant as part of the capstone student teaching experience.

Methods/Procedures

The population for this descriptive census study consisted of all (N = 62) university supervisors from 32 institutions with agricultural teacher education programs in the North Central Region of the American Association for Agricultural Education (AAAE) as identified through the AAAE directory, National FFA database, and a web search of online program directories.

Smalley et al.'s (2015a) instrument was slightly modified. Specifically, instrument directions and question stems were personalized to address the university supervisor respondent and used to collect data for this study. Smalley et al. (2015a) conducted a document analysis of agricultural education student teaching handbooks from the North Central Region of AAAE to determine student teaching skills and activities utilized in agricultural teacher education programs. The skills and activities were organized into eight constructs which included: planning instruction, teaching activities, evaluation of student performance, supervised agricultural experience, FFA activities, school-community relations, adult education, and teaching profession. The instrument was reviewed by a panel of experts consisting of six agricultural teacher educators and deemed valid.

Smalley et al. (2015a) piloted the instrument and reported internal consistency for each summated scale by construct (see Table 1) as recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). Reliability coefficients ranged from α = 0.72 to α = 0.88 and were considered acceptable to good (George & Mallery, 2003).

Table 1

Constructs, Number of Items, and Internal Consistency of Smalley et al.'s (2015a) Pilot Study Instrument

Construct	Number of items	Alpha[a]
School–community relations	14	0.88
Planning instruction	14	0.87
SAE	10	0.84
Teaching profession	8	0.82
FFA	15	0.81
Evaluation of student performance	5	0.79
Teaching	18	0.76
Adult education	5	0.72

[a] = Cronbach's alpha. Scale: >.9 = Excellent, >.8 = Good, >.7 = Acceptable, >.6 = Questionable, >.5 = Poor and <.5 = Unacceptable (George & Mallery, 2003).

Dillman, Smyth, and Christian's (2009) tailored design method was used to develop the electronic survey instrument and the data collection procedures. The instrument included a personalized set of instructions and was divided into three parts. In part one, university supervisors were asked to evaluate the perceived relevance of each student teaching skill or activity by construct on a three-point Likert-type scale (1 = *irrelevant*, 2 = *relevant*, 3 = *very relevant*). The midpoint of the scale—*relevant*—was determined because the statements were derived from handbooks and activities currently required in agricultural teacher education capstone experiences. Jacoby and Matell (1971) found justification in scoring Likert-type scaled items dichotomously or trichotomously and concluded that "reliability and validity are independent of the number of scale points" (p. 498). In part two of the instrument, university supervisors were asked to rank order the

eight constructs by level of importance. Finally, part three of the instrument contained relevant demographic information such as: gender, age, and years of experience supervising student teachers.

To maximize the response rate, a personalized email including the collaborators' names, a list of benefits associated with the study, and an embedded link to the electronic instrument was sent (Monroe & Adams, 2012). Personalized reminder emails were sent to non-respondents over a four-week period. The response rate was 80.65% (n = 50) from this census study of university supervisors in the North Central Region of AAAE. The usable response rate was 72.58% (n = 45) because 5 respondents reported that it had been more than five years since they had actively supervised a student teacher. The decision was made *a priori* to limit the responses to those who had recently (within the last 5 years) supervised student teachers. Nonresponse error was controlled by comparing early and late respondents as recommended by Lindner, Murphy, and Briers (2001). No statistically significant differences were found. Data were analyzed to determine construct grand means and standard deviations. To categorize each statement and construct, we established the following mean ranges: very relevant = 3.0–2.34, relevant = 2.33–1.67, and irrelevant = 1.66–1.00.

Results/Findings

Participant Demographics

The average respondent was a male university supervisor with six to 11 years of supervisory experience who currently worked at a research-intensive institution. Additional respondent demographic characteristics are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Summary of Respondents' Selected Demographic Characteristics

	f	%*
Gender		
Male	35	81.4
Female	8	18.6
Age		
30-39	12	28.6
40-49	8	19.0
50-59	12	28.6
60+	10	23.8
Institution		
Research Intensive	45	90.0
Non-Research Intensive	5	10.0

Table 2 (continued)

Summary of Respondents' Selected Demographic Characteristics

	f	%*
Years of Supervising Student Teachers		
0-5	7	16.3
6-11	12	27.9
12-17	6	14.0
18-23	6	14.0
24-29	7	16.3
30+	5	11.6
Recency of Student Teacher Supervision		
Within Last Five Years	45	90.0
Longer Than Five Years	5	10.0

Note: Valid percentage is reported for each demographic characteristic.

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which university supervisors deemed traditionally required student teaching skills and activities relevant as part of the capstone student teaching experience. Summated means (grand means) are reported for each of the eight constructs (see Table 3). University supervisors considered seven of the eight constructs very relevant and one construct—*adult education*—as relevant for student teaching.

Table 3

Relevance of Constructs Associated with the Student Teaching Experience

Construct	Grand mean	*SD*
Evaluation of student performance	2.94	0.20
SAE	2.77	0.39
FFA	2.66	0.46
Teaching	2.61	0.38
Planning instruction	2.58	0.48
Teaching profession	2.57	0.45
School–community relations	2.53	0.51
Adult education	1.97	0.70

Note. Scale: 1 = Irrelevant, 2 = Relevant, 3 = Very relevant.

Evaluation of student performance construct (*GM* = 2.94, *SD* = 0.20) activities focused on methods of student evaluation used during student teaching and are displayed in Table 4. Respondents considered all evaluation activities in this construct area as being very relevant.

Table 4

Relevance of Evaluation of Student Performance Activities Associated with the Student Teaching Experience

Performance Activities		Irrelevant		Relevant		Very Relevant			
	n	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	Mean	SD
Construct tests to assess student understanding, growth, and development	42	0	0.00	0	0.00	42	100.00	**3.00**	0.00
Develop and communicate methods for evaluating student performance	42	0	0.00	2	4.76	40	95.24	**2.95**	0.22
Utilize a grading system consistent with school policy and expectations of the cooperating teacher	42	0	0.00	2	4.76	40	95.24	**2.95**	0.22
Develop and use a grading rubric for class evaluation	42	0	0.00	4	9.52	38	90.48	**2.90**	0.30
Review tests and other evaluation instruments with the cooperating teacher	42	0	0.00	4	9.52	38	90.48	**2.90**	0.30
Evaluation of student performance construct								**2.94**	**0.20**

Note. Item mean is shown in boldface. Scale: 1 = Irrelevant, 2 = Relevant, 3 = Very relevant.

Additional activities were suggested by university supervisors in response to the following question: *What additional student evaluations activities are essential, but not listed above?* Summarized responses are listed below:

- review assessment after use and determine the validity of questions;
- develop a variety of formative and summative assessments to be used in formal instructional settings, SAE, and FFA
- construct and implement performance assessments to assess student understanding, growth and development
- provide students with feedback on performance
- modify instructional plans based on assessment results; assessing student performance (each learning standard assessed, multiple assessments used, assessments used throughout unit, assessments are valid and clear, appropriate adaptions for students as needed)
- establishing and communicating student performance expectations and assessment criteria
- emphasize the connection between unit and lesson plan objectives as a basis for evaluation planning

- involve students in self/peer evaluation or assessment; and use assessment data to inform practice.

Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) construct (*GM* = 2.77, *SD* = 0.39) activities focused on helping preservice student teachers gain a better understanding of this component of the school-based agriculture education program through activities related to planning, implementing, following-up, teaching with, and communicating to stakeholders about SAE. Table 5 displays the level of relevance, mean and standard deviation by individual item, the construct grand mean, and the standard deviation. University supervisors considered all SAE activities as very relevant.

Table 5

Relevance of Supervised Agricultural Experience Activities Associated with the Student Teaching Experience

Activities Dealing with SAE		Irrelevant		Relevant		Very Relevant			
	n	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	Mean	SD
Direct students in keeping records of their SAE	42	0	0.00	3	7.14	39	92.86	**2.93**	0.26
Help students with SAE plans and agreements	42	0	0.00	4	9.52	38	90.48	**2.90**	0.3
Relate classroom instruction to students' SAEs	42	0	0.00	4	9.52	38	90.48	**2.90**	0.3
Discuss SAE with the cooperating teacher and/or administrator	42	0	0.00	5	11.90	37	88.10	**2.88**	0.33
Help students understand how SAE relates to tasks performed by people in agricultural occupations	42	0	0.00	5	11.90	37	88.10	**2.88**	0.33
Guide students in the selection and/or expansion of their SAE	41	0	0.00	7	17.07	34	82.93	**2.83**	0.38
Assist students in solving problems associated with their SAE programs	42	0	0.00	10	23.81	32	76.19	**2.76**	0.43
Conduct SAE follow-up sessions	42	0	0.00	13	30.95	29	69.05	**2.69**	0.47
Work with employers and/or parents to develop students' SAE programs	42	2	4.76	14	33.33	26	61.90	**2.57**	0.59
Teach two lessons integrating personal finance into SAE.	42	2	4.76	20	47.62	20	47.62	**2.43**	0.59
SAE activities construct								**2.77**	**0.39**

Note. Item mean is shown in boldface. Scale: 1 = Irrelevant, 2 = Relevant, 3 = Very relevant.

University supervisors identified additional SAE activities in response to the following question: *What additional SAE teaching activities are essential, but not listed above?* Summarized responses included:

- implement SAE site visits
- assist students in completing SAE based FFA award applications
- contrast SAE to the principle of experiential learning
- adhere to student labor, liability, regulations relevant to student work experiences
- experiment with innovation of experiential learning as a component of each course and an integral part of career pathway development regardless of FFA membership (i.e. an experiential learning activity is a required evaluation component of every course).

FFA construct (*GM* = 2.66, *SD* = 0.46) activities are displayed in Table 6 are focused on providing preservice student teachers with experiences in providing leadership development and collecting and reviewing of documents to enhance understanding of the FFA program. University supervisors considered all but two FFA activities as being very relevant. Respondents considered *review procedures for state and county fair entries* and *assist in organizing the local FFA test plot* as being relevant.

Table 6

Relevance of FFA Activities Associated with Student Teaching Experience

Activities involved with FFA		Irrelevant		Relevant		Very Relevant			
	n	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	Mean	SD
Discuss with the cooperating teacher how to appropriately integrate FFA into classroom instruction	42	0	0.00	3	7.14	39	92.86	**2.93**	0.26
Supervise one FFA activity other than a regular meeting	42	0	0.00	3	7.14	39	92.86	**2.93**	0.26
Help officers plan an agenda and serve as FFA adviser for one or more FFA meetings	42	0	0.00	4	9.52	38	90.48	**2.90**	0.30
Relate FFA activities to class instruction	42	0	0.00	5	11.90	37	88.10	**2.88**	0.33
Obtain and review a copy of the FFA chapter's program of activities	42	0	0.00	9	21.43	33	78.57	**2.79**	0.42
Assist FFA officers with their duties as needed	42	1	2.38	8	19.05	33	78.57	**2.76**	0.48
Discuss fund-raising activities with the cooperating teacher	42	0	0.00	10	23.81	32	76.19	**2.76**	0.43
Assist a committee in planning and conducting an event	42	0	0.00	11	26.19	31	73.81	**2.74**	0.45
Assist a member in applying for an award or scholarship	42	0	0.00	12	28.57	30	71.43	**2.71**	0.46

Table 6 (continued)

Relevance of FFA Activities Associated with Student Teaching Experience

Activities involved with FFA		Irrelevant		Relevant		Very Relevant			
	n	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	Mean	SD
Assist in planning/attend/ participate in a state or national FFA leadership conference	42	0	0.00	12	28.57	30	71.43	**2.71**	0.46
Prepare a team (or individual) for a CDE event.	42	2	4.76	8	19.05	32	76.19	**2.71**	0.55
Teach one or more lessons on leadership or FFA	42	2	4.76	8	19.05	32	76.19	**2.71**	0.55
Plan and supervise an overnight trip involving students	42	5	11.90	17	40.48	20	47.62	**2.36**	0.69
Review procedures for state and county fair entries	42	7	16.67	21	50.00	14	33.33	**2.17**	0.70
Assist in organizing the local FFA test plot	42	12	28.57	22	52.38	8	19.05	**1.90**	0.69
FFA activities construct								**2.66**	**0.46**

Note. Item mean is shown in boldface. Scale: 1 = Irrelevant, 2 = Relevant, 3 = Very relevant.

University supervisors provided additional activities in response to the following question: *What additional FFA teaching activities are essential but not listed above?* Summarized responses included the following:

- assist with completing chapter level award applications
- assist with ordering materials from National FFA
- attend an FFA Alumni meeting, plan/assist with parent-member awards banquet
- involvement with the FFA Alumni chapter and activities
- involvement with procedure for FFA officer interview and election
- discuss FFA membership, participation, evaluation with cooperating teacher and/or administrator.

Teaching construct (*GM* = 2.61, *SD* = 0.38) activities associated with the student teaching experience focused on implementing pedagogical and management practices in a variety of settings. University supervisors considered all but two teaching activities as very relevant. Responses are displayed in Table 7. Respondents identified, *evaluate your cooperating teacher's teaching performance, develop and present a program/presentation on agricultural awareness*, and *prepare a bulletin board (traditional or electronic) for teaching/learning or motivation* as relevant.

Table 7

Relevance of Teaching Activities Associated with the Student Teaching Experience

Teaching activities		Irrelevant		Relevant		Very relevant			
	n	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*Mean*	*SD*
Direct student laboratory experiences	42	0	0.00	0	0.00	42	100.00	**3.00**	0.00
Direct students in problem solving	42	0	0.00	0	0.00	42	100.00	**3.00**	0.00
Use interest approaches to motivate students to learn	42	0	0.00	1	2.38	41	97.62	**2.98**	0.15
Prepare and use a variety of teaching aids	42	0	0.00	2	4.76	40	95.24	**2.95**	0.22
Utilize students' experiences in the teaching/learning process	42	0	0.00	2	4.76	40	95.24	**2.95**	0.22
Conduct a class discussion	41	0	0.00	2	4.88	39	95.12	**2.95**	0.22
Have a full teaching load of all classes	42	1	2.38	2	4.76	39	92.86	**2.90**	0.37
Conduct a class using small group instruction	42	0	0.00	5	11.90	37	88.10	**2.88**	0.33
Review discipline policies and procedures with the cooperating teacher and prepare written classroom and laboratory rules that you will enforce	42	0	0.00	5	11.90	37	88.10	**2.88**	0.33
Supervise students engaged in independent learning activities	42	0	0.00	5	11.90	37	88.10	**2.88**	0.33
Direct a student presentation	42	0	0.00	9	21.43	33	78.57	**2.79**	0.42
Use reference and resource materials (e.g., AEA, Internet, extension, community colleges)	42	0	0.00	9	21.43	33	78.57	**2.79**	0.42
Plan, organize, conduct, and evaluate a field trip	42	1	2.38	11	26.19	30	71.43	**2.69**	0.52
Teach a lesson using a computer	42	2	4.76	13	30.95	27	64.29	**2.60**	0.59
Utilize a resource person	42	2	4.76	13	30.95	27	64.29	**2.60**	0.59

Table 7 (continued)

Relevance of Teaching Activities Associated with the Student Teaching Experience

Teaching activities		Irrelevant		Relevant		Very relevant			
	n	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*Mean*	*SD*
Evaluate your cooperating teacher's teaching performance	41	8	19.51	13	31.71	20	48.78	**2.29**	0.78
Develop and present a program/presentation on agricultural awareness	42	6	14.29	23	54.76	13	30.95	**2.17**	0.66
Prepare a bulletin board (traditional or electronic) for teaching/learning or motivation	42	9	21.43	19	45.24	14	33.33	**2.12**	0.74
Teaching activities construct								**2.61**	**0.38**

Note. Item mean is shown in boldface. Scale: 1 = Irrelevant, 2 = Relevant, 3 = Very relevant.

University supervisors provide additional activities for consideration as a response to the following open ended question: *What additional teaching activities are essential, but not listed above?* Summarized responses included the following:

- share SAE student experiences, reflect on the student learning during each lesson
- record video of several teaching segments
- observe other teachers in the school
- observe ag teachers in other districts, integrate educational technological resources (not limited to computer as listed above)
- engage in co-teaching with cooperating teachers or others
- ag awareness listed above only if in a unit to be taught, not as a stand-alone project.

Table 8 shows responses for the *planning instruction* construct (*GM* = 2.58, *SD* = 0.48) activities associated with the student teaching experience focused on collecting/reviewing documents and reviewing classroom procedures. University supervisors considered all but two *planning instruction* activities as very relevant. However, respondents identified *inventory and evaluate references and instructional aids in the school and community* and *review articulations/other agreements between the Agricultural Education program and post-secondary program(s)* as relevant.

Table 8

Relevance of Planning Instruction Activities Associated with the Student Teaching Experience

Planning instruction activities		Irrelevant		Relevant		Very relevant			
	n	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*Mean*	*SD*
Review and demonstrate proper safety procedures in the school agriscience or ag. mechanics lab	42	0	0.00	1	2.38	41	97.62	**2.98**	0.15
Prepare and use teaching/lesson plans for all lessons	42	0	0.00	2	4.76	40	95.24	**2.95**	0.21
Develop a unit plan for each unit you teach	42	0	0.00	3	7.14	39	92.86	**2.93**	0.25
Obtain a copy of your cooperating teacher's course outlines, description, or syllabus	42	0	0.00	9	21.43	33	78.57	**2.79**	0.41
Develop learning experiences for students with special needs along with the special education teacher	42	0	0.00	10	23.81	32	76.19	**2.76**	0.42
Participate in administrative duties of the agricultural education program including Perkins reports, FFA program of activities, and Annual FFA and SAE reports.	42	0	0.00	15	35.71	27	64.29	**2.64**	0.48
Utilize a plan book or appointment book to schedule classes and activities	42	3	7.14	13	30.95	27	64.29	**2.62**	0.62
Determine school policies and procedures for handling FFA and other organization accounts	42	1	2.38	15	35.71	26	61.90	**2.60**	0.53
Develop learning experiences for talented and gifted students	41	1	2.44	20	48.78	20	48.78	**2.46**	0.54
Meet with the advisory council/committee about the local agriculture program	42	1	2.38	21	50.00	20	47.62	**2.45**	0.54
Determine procedures for purchasing tools, equipment, teaching materials, and supplies	42	3	7.14	19	45.24	20	47.62	**2.40**	0.61
Survey the agriculture facilities to determine the quantity and quality of tools and equipment by instructional areas	41	4	9.76	17	41.46	20	48.78	**2.39**	0.65

Table 8 (continued)

Relevance of Planning Instruction Activities Associated with the Student Teaching Experience

Planning instruction activities		Irrelevant		Relevant		Very relevant			
	n	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*Mean*	*SD*
Inventory and evaluate references and instructional aids in the school and community	42	6	14.29	21	50.00	15	35.71	**2.21**	0.67
Review articulations/other agreements between the Agricultural Education program and post-secondary program(s)	42	8	19.05	23	54.76	11	26.19	**2.07**	0.66
Planning activities construct								**2.58**	**0.48**

Note. Item mean is shown in boldface. Scale: 1 = Irrelevant, 2 = Relevant, 3 = Very relevant.

Additional activities were suggested by university supervisors as a response to the following question: *What additional planning instruction activities are essential but not listed above?* Summarized responses included the following:

- AET record keeping software
- SAE visits
- plans FFA activities before, during, and after regular hours
- have a working knowledge of the school's discipline procedures for individual students within her/his classroom
- develop a comfort level with a diverse range of assessment tools for topics in agriculture, and unit assessments.

T*eaching profession* construct (*GM* = 2.57, *SD* = 0.45) activities focused on the inner-workings of professional organizations and participation in professional development and are presented in Table 9. University supervisors considered all but two teaching profession activities very relevant. Two activities were considered relevant: *meet with the local educators' association representative* and *serve on a faculty/staff committee and serve on a faculty/staff committee*.

Table 9

Relevance of Teaching Profession Activities Associated with the Student Teaching Experience

Profession Activities		Irrelevant		Relevant		Very Relevant			
	n	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	Mean	SD
Discuss with the cooperating teacher the appropriate balance between personal and professional responsibilities	42	0	0.00	2	4.76	40	95.24	**2.95**	0.05
Review and discuss with cooperating teacher their teaching and extended/ summer contract including salary schedule	42	0	0.00	4	9.52	38	90.48	**2.90**	0.30
Attend a sub-district/district/area/ regional teacher ag association or FFA meeting	42	0	0.00	6	14.29	36	85.71	**2.86**	0.35
Discuss professional organizations (local and state education associations, NAAE, ACTE, etc.) as well as local community organizations with the cooperating teacher	42	0	0.00	9	21.43	33	78.57	**2.79**	0.42
Become familiar with the teaching standards. Complete a mock evaluation with the cooperating teacher and begin identifying artifacts that would demonstrate proficiency	42	1	2.38	9	21.43	32	76.19	**2.74**	0.50
Attend a local education association or school professional development event	42	2	4.76	19	45.24	21	50.00	**2.45**	0.59
Meet with the local educators association representative	42	9	21.43	21	50.00	12	28.57	**2.07**	0.71
Serve on a faculty/staff committee (ex. School Improvement)	42	16	38.10	18	42.86	8	19.05	**1.81**	0.74
Teaching activities profession construct								**2.57**	**0.45**

Note. Item mean is shown in boldface. Scale: 1 = Irrelevant, 2 = Relevant, 3 = Very relevant.

No additional *teaching profession* activities were identified by the university supervisors.

School–community relations construct (*GM* = 2.57, *SD* = 0.45) activities focused on providing visibility for an agricultural education program (Table 10). University supervisors considered nine of 14 school–community relations activities very relevant. The five activities identified as relevant included: *visit other rural and/or agricultural businesses in the community, visit the county Extension office to gather information about agriculture in the community*, *visit with agribusiness leaders about the local agriculture program*, *visit with other community leaders about the local agriculture program*, and *trade student teaching responsibilities with a student teacher in another school*.

Table 10

Relevance of School-Community Relation Activities Associated with the Student Teaching Experience

School-Community Relations Activities		Irrelevant		Relevant		Very Relevant			
	n	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*n*		Mean	SD
Confer with administrators about the qualities they want to see in a good teacher and go over important points in interviewing for a teaching position	42	0	0.00	3	7.14	39	92.86	**2.93**	0.26
Participate in parent-teacher and/or IEP conferences	42	0	0.00	5	11.90	37	88.10	**2.88**	0.62
Attend school related meetings such as faculty meetings, parent's association, school board, etc.	42	0	0.00	7	16.67	35	83.33	**2.83**	0.58
Visit one or more other classes	42	0	0.00	8	19.05	34	80.95	**2.81**	0.60
Have a school district administrator who is responsible for teacher evaluation observe your teaching and provide suggestions for improvement	42	0	0.00	9	21.43	33	78.57	**2.79**	0.60
Develop correspondence for teachers, administrators, and parents to inform and secure permission for field trips and/or overnight trips	42	1	2.38	8	19.05	33	78.57	**2.76**	0.63
Visit a high school agriculture program in a neighboring community. Consider visiting a school that is on a different schedule (block or traditional) from your student teaching center	42	1	2.38	15	35.71	26	61.90	**2.60**	0.60

Table 10 (continued)

Relevance of School-Community Relation Activities Associated with the Student Teaching Experience

School-Community Relations Activities		Irrelevant		Relevant		Very Relevant			
	n	*f*	%	*f*	%	*n*		Mean	SD
Attend at least one community related meeting such as civic organizations, garden clubs, Farm Bureau, fair board, etc.	42	1	2.38	19	45.24	22	52.38	**2.50**	0.61
Attend or assist with a school function or athletic event	42	3	7.14	15	35.71	24	57.14	**2.50**	0.56
Visit other rural and/or agricultural businesses in the community	42	2	4.76	24	57.14	16	38.10	**2.33**	0.66
Visit the county extension office to gather information about agriculture in the community	42	6	14.29	17	40.48	19	45.24	**2.31**	0.54
Visit with agribusiness leaders about the local agriculture program	42	4	9.52	23	54.76	15	35.71	**2.26**	0.66
Visit with other community leaders about the local agriculture program	42	3	7.14	28	66.67	11	26.19	**2.19**	0.62
Trade student teaching responsibilities with a student teacher in another school for one day	42	17	40.48	17	40.48	8	19.05	**1.79**	7.14
School-community relation construct								**2.53**	**0.61**

Note. Item mean is shown in boldface. Scale: 1 = Irrelevant, 2 = Relevant, 3 = Very relevant.

An additional activity was identified by a university supervisor in response to the following question: *What additional school-community relations activities are essential but not listed above?* The activity listed was: identify, observe, and interview a teacher within the system who others consider highly proficient.

A*dult education* construct (*GM* = 1.97, *SD* = 0.70) activities focused on promoting formally-sponsored agricultural education programs with adult learners and are displayed in Table 11. Respondents considered all adult learning activities relevant.

Table 11

Relevance of Adult Education Activities Associated with the Student Teaching Experience

Adult Education Activities		Irrelevant		Relevant		Very Relevant			
	n	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	Mean	SD
Review past adult education activities conducted by the cooperating teacher	42	8	19.05	21	50.00	13	30.95	**2.12**	0.71
Participate in adult education activities	42	10	23.81	21	50.00	11	26.19	**2.02**	0.72
List procedures used by the cooperating teacher in planning, conducting, and evaluating adult education activities	41	10	24.39	22	53.66	9	21.95	**1.98**	0.69
Meet with an advisory committee to plan adult education activities	42	14	33.33	19	45.24	9	21.43	**1.88**	0.74
Plan, conduct, and/or coordinate an adult education activity	42	13	30.95	22	52.38	7	16.67	**1.86**	0.68
Adult education activities construct					**1.97**	**0.70**			

Note. Item mean is shown in boldface. Scale: 1 = Irrelevant, 2 = Relevant, 3 = Very relevant.

No additional activities were identified by university supervisors in response to the following question: *What additional adult education activities are essential but not listed above?* One respondent stated "In our state, adult education is not typically connected to an agriculture instructor's responsibilities."

Action research was identified by university supervisors as an additional activity in response to the following question: *What other activities that weren't included as part of the student teaching experience would you like to see included for future student teachers?*

Finally, participants were asked to rank order each of the eight student teaching constructs from most to least importance (1 = Most Important, 8 = Least Important). Respondents identified *Planning Instruction* (*GM* = 1.34, *SD* = 0.53), *Teaching* (*GM* = 1.83, *SD* = 0.59) and *Evaluation of Student Performance* (*GM* = 3.07, *SD* = 0.85) as the top three construct areas of importance in the student teaching experience. Adult education was ranked least important (*GM* = 7.83, *SD* = .038). Table 12 displays the minimum and maximum ranks, grand mean, and standard deviation for each construct.

Table 12

Rank Order by Importance of Student Teaching Construct Activities by University Supervisors (N = 41)

Construct	Minimum	Maximum	Grand Mean	*SD*
Planning instruction	1.00	3.00	1.34	0.53
Teaching	1.00	3.00	1.83	0.59
Evaluation of student performance	1.00	7.00	3.07	0.85
SAE	3.00	6.00	4.68	0.76
FFA	4.00	7.00	4.85	0.88
School–community relations	3.00	8.00	5.90	1.18
Teaching profession	1.00	8.00	6.49	1.27
Adult Education	7.00	8.00	7.83	0.38

Note: 1 = Most Important, 8 = Least Important

Conclusions/Implications/Recommendations

This study sought to determine the extent university supervisors deemed traditional student teaching activities relevant as part of the preservice student teaching experience. University supervisors identified seven construct areas as being very relevant and one area as relevant in the student teaching experience. We conclude that university supervisors in the North Central Region of AAAE perceive activities and skills commonly required of student teachers as relevant to the capstone student teaching experience. Because the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) identifies attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control as antecedents to intention to implement a given behavior, a positive perception of student teaching skills and activities should impact university supervisors' intention to implement them in their capstone experience.

All five of the individual *evaluation of student performance* construct (*GM* = 2.94, *SD* = 0.20) activities were rated as very relevant by university supervisors in this study and this construct had the highest grand mean of the eight constructs. Individual activities related to developing formative and summative student assessments/grading rubrics, explaining methods for evaluating student performance, utilizing grading systems consistent with cooperating teacher expectations, and reviewing evaluation instruments with the cooperating teacher comprised this construct. Yet, when asked to rank order each of the constructs by their importance in the student teaching experience, *evaluation of student performance* emerged as third, directly behind *planning instruction* and *teaching*. As the construct area with the highest grand mean in this study, evaluation of student performance aligned with a common need reported by Krysher, Robinson, Montgomery, & Edwards (2012) in that student teachers struggle with assessing student learning. It is refreshing to see that university supervisors value the *evaluation of student performance* as it may suggest the beginning of a transition from a focus on teaching practices to more attention to student learning (Stripling, Thoron, & Estepp, 2014).

The only other area in this study in which respondents identified all individual activities as very relevant was the SAE construct. At times seen as unimportant (Robinson & Haynes, 2011; Young & Edwards, 2006), SAE-related activities implemented in the student teaching experience can help to fill the "gap between what is taught in pre-service programs and what is [eventually]

implemented" (Rubenstein, Thoron, & Estepp, 2014, p. 81) in school-based agricultural education programs.

Further, it should be noted that the *Adult Education* construct was the only area considered relevant. When asked to rank order the constructs, respondents ranked *Adult Education* last. Although in some states, the secondary agricultural education teacher may be responsible for implementing adult education activities, respondents in our study suggested otherwise.

The results of this study aren't surprising, nor should they be. It is the university supervisors' primary responsibility to plan and evaluate the student teaching experience (Valencia et al., 2007). As such, the activities should be relevant and, if they weren't, it is this group who has the most authority to modify and change the expectations. With that said, this study did identify that, collectively, adult education is no longer as relevant or considered a priority as part of the student teaching experience as it may previously have been. In addition, we framed and explored what traditionally has been required of student teachers. So, these results are retrospective and conform to the traditions of agricultural teacher education programs. Now that a baseline of relevant skills and activities have been established, there is a need to look forward and project the future needs of teachers to ensure that 1) what is currently considered relevant will continue to be relevant and 2) other relevant skills and activities required of future teachers are included in the student teaching experience.

Although limitations are evident as this study only considered one AAAE region, findings identify activities which university supervisors believe most relevant in the student teaching experience as they support preservice teacher knowledge in context (Sticht, 1975). Respondents identified several additional skills and activities as being relevant to the student teaching experience. These activities should be reviewed in light of the literature and considered as part of the capstone student teaching experience. This study is further limited by the instrument's use of a three-point relevance scale which limited variability in mean response. The instrument used in this study was selected so that we could compare university supervisors' responses to the previous studies of the other triadic members of the student teaching experience. Future studies should consider an expanded relevance scale.

Implications for teacher education programs based upon the conclusions of this study are evident. Teacher preparation program improvements should continue to be made in the area of field experiences (Latham & Vogt, 2007; Retallick & Miller, 2007). Skills and activities deemed important to the capstone student teaching experience could be systematically integrated and sequenced within earlier field experiences. Valid and reliable performance assessments associated with the development of skills based on specific activities inherent to the school based agricultural education experience are needed. Activities should be aligned with those included in national performance-based, subject-specific assessments commonly being adopted by teacher preparation programs. Future research should seek to determine alignment of best practices in SBAE national standards-based assessments as a means of continuing to improve the capstone student teaching experience as a critical component of the teacher education program.

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