

## **SUPERVISION OF SUPERVISED AGRICULTURAL EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS: A SYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH**

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### **Abstract**

*This article presents a synthesis of research and identifies research deficiency on supervising supervised agricultural experience (SAE) programs during a thirty-year period, 1964 - 1993. A library search of selected sources was used to gather data for the study. Research in this area was found to be primarily descriptive. SAE program partners (teachers, students, parents, and employers) value the supervisory role of teachers in conducting SAE programs, however, implementation of the **practice** varies **greatly** from state to state. Cumulative data are not available to guide the development of policies and standards for supervising SAE programs. Future research in this area should focus on effects of supervision on SAE programs, when in a SAE programs is supervision most critical to student learning, roles of each partner in supervising SAE programs, goals for SAE visits, strategies for planning SAE programs and recording accomplishments, extended contracts and release time for SAE supervision, and teacher education related to supervising SAE programs.*

Supervised agriculture experience (SAE) programs are agricultural education's application of experiential learning. Kolb (1984) advanced that experiential learning has four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. SAE programs feature personalized learning with supervision. Phipps and Osborne (1988) explained that SAE programs provide students with practical agricultural activities of educational value, systematic instruction, and supervision by teachers, parents, employers, or others. A Committee on Agricultural Education in Secondary Schools advocated that all students enrolled in agricultural education participate in worthwhile SAE programs for the purpose of learning, with appreciation for earning (National Research Council, 1988). Dyer and Osborne (1995) advanced that SAE programs must be recognized for their value as an experiential learning tool.

Supervision is needed to provide individual instruction in selecting, planning, conducting, and evaluating SAE programs. Supervision at the sites

of SAE programs allows teachers to facilitate learning and to engage parents and employers as partners in the learning process (Phipps & Osborne, 1988). "Individual instruction on home visits or on visits to businesses or farms where students are obtaining participatory experience requires considerable teacher time, but the results obtained justify the time required" (Phipps & Osborne, p. 355).

Research examines current practices and develops new knowledge, providing direction for future developments in the discipline (Williams, 1991). Much research has been conducted on supervising SAE programs. Bat-rick, Hughes, and Baker (1991) reported that the compilation of past research findings on aspects of SAE are needed to "provide the profession a basis on which to make decisions and base future research efforts" (p. 35).

Findings presented in this article and a companion article, "Benefits of Supervised Agricultural Experience Programs: A Synthesis of Research," coupled with the earlier syntheses on

participation in SAE programs (Dyer & Osborne, 1995) and quality of SAE programs (Dyer and Osborne, 1996) provide a comprehensive review of research related to SAE during a thirty-year period, 1964 - 1993.

### **Objectives**

The primary objective of this investigation was to synthesize research related to supervising SAE programs. A secondary objective was to identify areas of deficiency in research related to supervising SAE programs.

### **Procedures**

A library search was used to gather data for the study. Five reference sources were searched for articles/papers/dissertations completed from 1964 through June 1993: Journal of Agricultural Education, The Journal of the American Association of Teacher Education in Agriculture, doctoral dissertations from Dissertation Abstracts International, proceedings from regional and national Agricultural Education Research Meetings, and ERIC Documentation Reproduction Service.

### **Findings**

#### **Support for Supervision**

The practice of teachers supervising SAE programs has broad base support among teachers, administrators, and employers. However, agricultural education teachers are more likely than school administrators to view supervision as part of the teacher's regular workload and not extra-curricula activities (Beeman 1967). In Michigan, teachers and superintendents were more in agreement on the teacher's role in conducting SAE programs than in any other aspect of the agricultural education program (Drake, 1969). Employers believed that teachers should provide on-site instruction and advise on a systematic basis (Fletcher, Williams, & Miller, 1985). In a study by Rush and Foster (1984), both school administrators

and teachers showed strong support for teacher supervision of SAE programs, with administrators rating supervision highest in placement programs. Harris and Newcomb (1985) reported that teacher attitudes toward SAE supervision were higher when they were reimbursed for travel.

#### **Source of Supervision**

The agriculture teacher is the primary supervisor of SAE programs. Herren and Cole (1984) reported that the agriculture teacher is the key person in supervising SAE programs. Employers can effectively assist with placement SAE programs and parents can help with home-base programs. Teachers from "top" programs visited students regularly to, supervise their SAE programs (French; 1985). Harris and Newcomb (1985) reported that those with high quality SAE programs placed great emphasis on supervised visits.

Students from farms with traditional, production-oriented SAEs were more likely to receive needed teacher supervision and assistance in planning their programs (Osborne, 1988a). Briers (1979) found that teachers with more farm experience make more supervised visits to beginning students. The smaller the class size, the greater the probability the student received supervision by the agricultural education teacher (Byers, 1972). The quality and size of SAE programs were found to be significantly related to travel funds available (Arrington & McCracken, 1983; Case & Stewart 1985).

#### **Scope of Teacher Supervision**

The amount of SAE supervision by teachers seems to be decreasing. Knight (1977) reported that Ohio agricultural education teachers spent 5.5 hours per week above their normal teaching duties supervising SAE programs. Foster (1986) found that 52% of Nebraska instructors made two or more supervised visits per student per year while teachers in Illinois (Osborne, 1988a) averaged two or more

supervised visits per student per year. In Montana, teachers visited students at a rate of just over one visit per student per year (Shelhamer, 1984). Herren (1987) reported that the average number of visits made during the student's last year of school to the 1984 regional and national FFA proficiency winners was 5.33; however, some students indicated that they received no SAE supervision.

McComas (1970) reported that 80% of teachers identified as being "most effective" indicated that seven supervised visits per year were needed to adequately supervise a student, while 60% of the teachers identified as "least effective" perceived six visits per year as necessary. Regional and national FFA proficiency winners in 1984 felt they were visited often enough, but were unsure if improvements made in SAE programs were attributable to visits (Herren, 1987).

Morton (1980) did not find a significant relationship between the number of supervised visits and student achievement on an agriculture knowledge test. Mick, Stewart, and Claycomb (1984) found no significant relationship between the number of supervised visits made and the job placement of the students. L. E. Lee (1985) found little relationship between SAE program scope and amount of teacher supervision.

#### Value of Teacher Supervision

Positive relationships have been found between the number of teacher supervised visits and SAE program quality (Anyadoh & Barrick, 1990; Arrington & McCracken, 1983; Case & Stewart, 1985; Gibson, 1988; Harris & Newcomb, 1985). Other studies found a positive relationship between student perceptions of SAE programs and the amount of teacher supervision received (Byers, 1972; Jones, 1981). Arrington (1981) reported a positive relationship between the number of supervised visits and SAE program scope and participation in FFA activities. A study in Idaho (Foster & Riesenber, 1985) found the amount of

teacher supervision as being an indicator of program quality identified by principals and teachers. Osborne (1988a) reported that 30% of SAE programs listed at "highest quality" received four or more teacher visits per year, while only 16% of the "lowest quality" programs received four or more visits. In a Montana study, 80% of the students reported that teacher visits were at least somewhat helpful (Shelhamer, 1984).

Williams (1984) identified five ways teachers provide assistance to students in SAE programs: (1) record keeping, (2) encouragement, (3) summarizing SAE records, (4) teaching skills, and (5) helping students set educational goals. Christenson (1964) suggested that agricultural education teachers should establish working relationships with parents during supervised visits. Parental attitude toward SAE was positively related to teachers providing meaningful SAE program supervision (Byers, 1972). Harris & Newcomb (1985) found that Agricultural education teachers supported the practice of individualized instruction through supervised visits.

Some teachers and students did not place high value on SAE visits. Osborne (1988b) concluded that teachers in an Illinois study did not exert a strong effort to supervise SAE programs. Miller (1980) reported that 42% of the teachers in North Carolina did not "regularly" visit students. In a New York report, 25% of the teachers did not make supervised visits. Of those who did, 55% of the students were visited only once (Berkey & Sutphin, 1984). One-third of the seniors in a Florida study did not have a SAE program visit made to their job placement site (Arrington & Price, 1983). Pals and Slocombe (1989) reported that teachers who provided low quality SAE programs for their students placed less emphasis on supervised visits than did teachers who provided high quality SAE programs. Burnett and Smith (1983), in a national study of horticultural programs, found that only 2/3 of the respondents reported SAE program visits.

### Release Time for Teacher Supervision

Release time for teacher supervision of SAE programs is not consistent. Studies by Gibson (1988) and Harris and Newcomb (1985) found a positive relationship between the quality of SAE programs and the school administrator's support for release time. Herren and Cole (1984) concluded that agriculture teachers should have at least one period during the school day for SAE program supervision, but supervision should be done even if the period is lost. McCall (1983) reported that many Colorado schools provided time for SAE supervision. Most programs in New York, however, did not provide released teacher time for supervising SAE programs (Berkey & Sutphin, 1984). Beeman (1967) reported that over 50% of the school administrators in his study disagreed with releasing agriculture teachers at 1:00 p.m. each day to make supervised visits; no agriculture teachers disagreed. Smith, Lawrence, and Gartin (1990) concluded that it is difficult to administer educational activities when school administrators fail to recognize the unique characteristics of agricultural education programs, including supervising SAE programs.

### Plans for SAE Programs and Supervision

The planning of SAE programs is not widely practiced. Developing long-range plans was a strategy observed in Illinois to help students conduct SAE programs, while developing short-range goals such as monthly schedules of supervisory visits and SAE orientation sessions were strategies seldom used by teachers. Teachers who placed higher expectations on their students for SAE participation were more extensive in their planning and supervising efforts (Osborne, 1988a). However, only 1/4 of the SAE programs in a New York study had written plans (Berkey & Sutphin, 1984), and only 40% of Nebraska teachers had written SAE policies (Foster, 1986). Harris and Newcomb (1985) reported that agriculture teachers did not support the practice of planning and keeping records of supervisory visits. Agriculture

teachers viewed submission of daily or weekly travel agenda much less favorable than did school administrators (Beeman, 1967).

Plans and reports of SAE programs and supervision can serve as communication tools. However, it was found that only 31% of all teachers in an Illinois study completed an annual summary of SAE programs, and only 23% shared the report with school administrators (Osborne, 1988b). Ninety-six percent of the teachers in a Texas study kept their administrators well informed of their summer activities, while 85% of the administrators agreed. However, 45% of the administrators contented that they could not easily locate their agricultural education teacher on a daily basis during the summer (Williams, 1981). Herren and Cole (1984) concluded that each teacher should maintain records of mileage, student progress, and recommendations to the student for SAE program improvement.

### Extended Contracts and Teacher Supervision

Most agricultural education teachers prefer an extended summer contract with which to conduct a comprehensive agricultural education program, including supervising SAE programs (Miller & Short, 1986). Camp and Kotrlik (1985) found that teachers across the United States assigned the largest block of their summer time (20%) to supervised visits, and teachers felt they should spend even more time supervising student SAE programs. According to Herren and Cole (1984), SAE programs cannot be conducted effectively without summer contracts for teachers.

SAE programs were found to be of higher quality in departments with extended teacher contracts (Anyadoh & Barrick, 1990; Arrington & McCracken, 1983; Case & Stewart, 1985; Gibson, 1988). Teachers on extended contracts are more involved in supervised visits and SAE program planning (Osborne, 1988b; Arrington, 1984). McCall (1983) reported that the activity level of SAE programs was greater in programs where

teachers were on extended contracts. In Oregon, supervising SAE programs was found to be the most important summer activity of teachers (Swan & Cole, 1991). In Texas, teachers indicated current and prospective students should be assisted with SAE programs during the summer (Williams, 1981).

Not all studies, however, supported the merit of extended employment. Disagreement was observed between agricultural education teachers and school administrators in South Dakota on summer program activities (Witt, cited in Lee, J. S., 1985). French (1985) concluded that the length of the teacher's contract had no bearing on SAE programs. Dunham and Long (1984) and Foster (1986) reported that extended contracts did not have an impact on student participation in SAE programs. Extended employment for agricultural education teachers appears to decline as the emphasis on SAE programs decline. For example, in New York, summer employment is provided for SAE supervision in only about 50% of the agricultural education programs (Berkey & Sutphin, 1984). Watkins (cited in Barrick, et. al., 1991) reported that students perceived supervisory visits during the summer months to be of little value; however: employers believed that students benefited from the visits.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Research on supervising SAE programs is primarily descriptive; explaining views of partners regarding the practice. Research designs that allow for the manipulation and control of variables are lacking. Research findings were noncumulative, making the theoretical base for supervising SAE programs somewhat fragile. Empirical data on the effect of supervision on the quality of SAE programs are needed to guide policy formulation for supervising SAE programs. The absence of such data curtails the establishment of standards for supervising SAE programs.

Teachers, school administrators, and employers value the supervisory role of teachers in conducting SAE programs, however, implementation appears to vary greatly from state to state. Teachers give more attention to supervising production-oriented programs than to other types of SAE programs. The need for teacher supervision of placement SAE programs was especially evident to school administrators and employers. Research on the role of parents in supervising SAE programs was limited. Experiential learning, as applied through SAE programs, may not be fully understood and/or valued by all partners. Research is needed on the roles of partners in supervising different types of SAE programs.

Since the teacher is the key provider of SAE supervision, research is needed to determine the content related to SAE supervision to be included in teacher education programs. Attention should also be given to developing strategies for working with school administrators to develop local policies for SAE supervision.

Research is needed on how written SAE program plans and reports can be used to help communicate teacher expectations for SAE programs, facilitate individualized learning, and serve as a communication tool among partners. "Educators must stop equating SAE programs with record keeping, and recognize them for their value as an experiential learning tool" (Dyer & Osborne, 1995, p. 10). Simple tools for long-range and short-range planning, recording, and evaluating SAE programs should be developed and tested.

While a positive relationship exists between the number of teacher visits and SAE program quality, some students received little or no teacher supervision. Barriers to teacher supervision included lack of release time, large classes, and limited funds for teacher travel to SAE sites. Strategies for removing these barriers need to be investigated.

The frequency of extended (summer) contracts for agricultural education teachers appears to be on the decline across the United States. This raises some concerns because teacher supervision of SAE programs is an important s-er activity and SAE programs were of higher quality in departments with extended teacher contracts. Research is needed on the effect of SAE supervision during the summer on SAE programs scope and quality.

#### Research Deficiencies

This synthesis identified several areas of research deficiency pertaining to supervising SAE programs. Future researchers should seek answers to the following questions to make the theoretical base for supervising SAE programs more complete.

What are the effects of supervision on SAE program quality?

What are the goals of SAE supervision?

Should standards for supervision vary by types of SAE programs?

When in SAE programs is supervision most beneficial to student learning?

What is the role of each partner in supervising SAE programs?

What should the policies and standards be for supervising SAE programs?

How should SAE programs be planned and evaluated?

What is the most effective way to record SAE program achievements?

What is the justification for teacher release time for SAE supervision?

What are the effects of summer teacher contracts on SAE program supervision?

What should be included in teacher education related to supervising SAE programs?

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