

PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE BENEFITS VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE STUDENTS DERIVE FROM SUPERVISED OCCUPATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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Supervised occupational experience (SOE) is a way to provide vocational agriculture students with real life experiences essential for work in agricultural occupations. Effective SOE programs take students into the community where parents have an opportunity to observe and participate in the teaching-learning process. Parents recognize that SOE assists students in the identification of an agricultural occupation and develop those skills essential to enter and satisfactorily progress in an agricultural occupation of interest.

Research completed by Williams (1977) identified "parents" as an important factor in vocational agriculture SOE programs. Rawls (1978) designed the research herein to focus on parental perceptions of the benefits vocational agriculture students may derive from SOE.

Purpose and Objective

The purpose of this research was to determine the benefits vocational agriculture students derive from SOE as perceived by parents. The specific objectives were to:

1. Identify the benefits vocational students derive from SOE as perceived by the total and subgroups of parents.
2. Determine if significant differences exist among subgroups of parents in benefits vocational agriculture students derived from SOE.
3. Identify and analyze the relationship between clusters of benefits.

Methodology

The population for this research consisted of all parents of Iowa vocational agriculture students who were high school seniors in 1976-1977. The population was divided into four groups based on the highest FFA degree held by the students. A stratified random sample was drawn from four subgroups: 1) parents of students who had attained no FFA degree; 2) parents of students who had attained the Greenhand Degree; 3) parents of students who had attained the Chapter Farmer Degree; and 4) parents of students who had attained the Iowa Farmer Degree. A mailed questionnaire was developed and used to collect data from the sample. The questionnaire was designed to assess benefits

derived from SOE programs. A 1-to-99 scale was used for parents to indicate how beneficial they felt SOE was to their sons and daughters by responding to 40 statements.

The questionnaire and a cover letter were mailed to the homes of individuals in the sample. Four follow-up mailings were made at two week intervals to the non-respondents. These procedures yielded a 63 percent return of properly completed questionnaires.

Means and standard deviations were calculated for the total group and each subgroup of parents. One-way analysis of variance was used to test for significant differences among the four groups of parents on each of the 40 benefit variables studied. When significant F-ratios were observed, the Scheffe' Test was used to identify significant differences between all the possible pairs of group means.

Factor analysis was used to identify statistically acceptable clusters of benefits. The Pearson product moment correlation was used to determine the relationship between benefit clusters.

Findings

The findings of the research are summarized below:

1. The total sample of parents rated 39 of the 40 benefit variables above "average benefit" to the student. The variable not rated above average was "Improving school attendance until graduation."
2. Parents of students who held the Iowa Farmer Degree indicated that SOE was beneficial to their sons and daughters on all 40 benefit variables.
3. The means for parents of students who had attained the Iowa Farmer Degree were significantly higher than the means for one or more of the other subgroups of parents for 38 of the 40 benefit variables.
4. Parents of the students who attained the Chapter Farmer Degree rated 37 of the 40 benefit variables above average. The variables not rated above average were:
 - a. Helped attain advanced FFA degrees
 - b. Extended education from the school to the community
 - c. Improved school attendance until graduation
5. The means for parents of students who had attained the Chapter Farmer Degree were significantly higher for 34 of the benefit variables than the mean for parents of students who had attained the Greenhand Degree.
6. Parents of students who had attained the Greenhand Degree rated 22 of the 40 benefit variables above average. The variables not rated above average were:
 - a. Encouraged the keeping of records
 - b. Provided experience in conducting business
 - c. Promoted student-parent relationship
 - d. Contributed to relationships between school and home

- e. Provided an opportunity to manage money
 - f. Encouraged learning while earning money
 - g. Encouraged the use of business procedures
 - h. Helped maintain a favorable home environment
 - i. Aided in making career choices
 - j. Developed occupational skills needed in an off-farm agricultural occupation
 - k. Helped attain advanced FFA degrees
 - l. Provided an opportunity for individualized teaching
 - m. Provided a way to grow into farming
 - n. Contributed to community development
 - o. Identified problems in farming or agribusiness jobs to be solved in vocational agriculture classes
 - p. Encouraged the use of approved procedures for marketing agricultural products
 - q. Extended education from the school to the community
 - r. Improved school attendance until graduation
7. The means for parents of students who had attained the Greenhand Degree were significantly higher for 19 of the benefit variables than the means for parents of students who had attained no FFA degree.
8. Parents of students who had attained no FFA degree rated 22 of the 40 benefit variables above average. The variables not rated above average were:
- a. Promoted interest in agricultural studies
 - b. Encouraged use of approved agricultural practices
 - c. Developed skills needed by people in farming
 - d. Promoted experience in conducting business
 - e. Promoted student-parent relationship
 - f. Contributed to relationship between school and home
 - g. Provided an opportunity to manage money
 - h. Encouraged learning while earning money
 - i. Developed occupational skills needed in an off-farm agricultural occupation
 - j. Provided a way to grow into an agribusiness job
 - k. Helped attain advanced FFA degrees
 - l. Provided an opportunity for individualized teaching
 - m. Provided a way to grow into farming
 - n. Contributed to community development
 - o. Identified problems in farming or agribusiness jobs to be solved in vocational agriculture classes
 - p. Encouraged the use of approved procedures for marketing
 - q. Extended education from the school to the community
 - r. Improved school attendance until graduation
9. The benefits parents perceive their sons and daughters receive from their SOE programs varied somewhat with degrees students held in FFA. The greatest benefit identified by parents of students who held the Iowa Farmer Degree was to earn a higher FFA degree. Parents of students who held the Chapter Farmer Degree place the highest value on promoting the acceptance of responsibility while parents of students who held the Greenhand Degree identified the greatest benefit pro-

- vided by SOE to be promoting student-vocational agriculture teacher relationship. Parents of students who held no FFA degree while enrolled in vocational agriculture indicated that developing pride in employment was the greatest benefit their sons and daughters receive from SOE.
10. Results of a factor analysis identified three clusters of benefits vocational agriculture students derived from SOE. They were:
 - a. Work attitude
 - b. Occupational development
 - c. Human relations skills
 11. A correlation analysis revealed a significant relationship among the three benefit clusters.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this research revealed that parents perceived SOE programs to be valuable to students. This research has implications for teacher education and for personnel responsible for administration and supervision of vocational agriculture programs. Based upon the findings of this research, the following general recommendations were made:

1. Preservice vocational agriculture teacher education should include instruction on how to activate and utilize parents as a resource in SOE programs of vocational agriculture students.
2. Inservice vocational agriculture teachers should be informed of the benefits parents perceive students to receive from SOE and how to activate and utilize parents as a resource.
3. Materials should be developed to communicate to parents the contributions of SOE to the learning process.
4. Research efforts are needed to identify benefits provided students through SOE programs as perceived by students, school administrators, teachers, and agribusiness personnel.
5. The benefits that parents perceive SOE programs as providing students should be communicated to personnel responsible for administration and supervision of vocational agriculture programs.

References

- Rawls, Willie J. *Parental Perceptions of Vocational Agriculture Supervised Occupational Experience Program in Iowa*, Ph.D. Dissertation. Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, 1978.
- Williams, David L. "Relationships Between Vocational Agriculture Students' Supervised Occupational Experience and Selected Variables," *The Journal of Vocational Education Research*, Spring, 1977, Vol. II, No. I, pp. 17-28.