

The Value of SOEP Activities in Relationship to Occupational
Status of the 1974 to 1984 Belgrade High School Graduates of
the Vocational Agriculture Program

by

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of the requirements for the degree

of

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in

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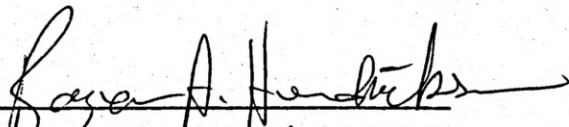
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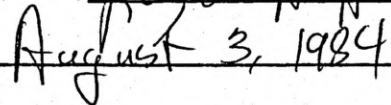
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

VITA	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	vii
ABSTRACT	viii
 CHAPTER I: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING.	 1
Introduction.	1
The Purpose of the Study.	5
Need for the Study.	5
Objectives for the Study.	7
Assumptions	8
Limitations	9
Definitions	9
Methodology	10
 CHAPTER II: THE REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.	 13
Educational Literature.	13
Literature Summary.	19
 CHAPTER III: PRESENTATION OF DATA	 21
Population Information.	21
SOEP Information.	25
Occupation Information.	32
Education Information	33
Perception of SOEP Benefits	34
Perception of Advisor Visitations	36
 CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	 39
Conclusions	39
Implications.	41
Recommendations For Further Study	42
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 43
APPENDICES	46
Appendix A.	47
Cover Letter	48
Appendix B.	50
Questionnaire.	51

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE

1	Population Response Rate.	21
2	Ages of Former Students	22
3	Relationship Between Years Since Graduation and Employment in Ag Related Jobs and Non-Ag Related Jobs.	23
4	Years of Participation in Vocational Agriculture While Attending Belgrade High School.	24
5	Years of Membership in FFA and Years of Time Participating in SOEP	25
6	Student Perception of Area of SOEP and Recordbook Requirement.	26
7.	Jobs or Activities in Which Students Participated as Part of Their SOEP.	27
8	Scope of SOE Production Enterprises	29
9	Ag Busness SOEP Activities.	30
10	Jobs Held Since High School	31
11	Level at Which Students Were Employed	32
12	Educational Level Attained by Respondents	34
13	Perception of Selected SOE Benefits	35
14	Number of Advisor Visitations Per Year.	37
15	Time Spent by Advisor During Visitation	37

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to determine the perceptions of the value of SOEP activities by graduates of Belgrade High School who had participated in the total vocational agriculture program. The objectives were to seek information regarding the nature and scope of past SOEP activities and the effect the SOEP activities had on the former student's occupational choice and further education. A combination open and closed form questionnaire was administered by telephone to obtain data from respondents. Data from the population showed that most of the SOE projects were in the farm placement area with nearly all of the projects being agriculture related. Sixty-one percent of the respondents had participated in some form of formal education since graduation from high school and 54 percent planned to engage in further education. Ninety-six percent of the former students felt that the SOEP was helpful to some degree while 57 percent felt that it was little or no help in acquiring the first job and 48.9 percent felt that the SOEP was of little or no help for advancement in their present job. The researcher concluded that 77 percent of the SOE programs were agriculture related. Those respondents with production projects had a scope of between one and 50 head, depending on the type of livestock raised, or less than 50 acres, if they raised crops. The advisor visitations were of little or no help, according to 42 percent of the respondents and 25 percent said that they received no visitations. Sixty percent of the respondents felt that the SOEP had helped them to get their first job after high school and 69 percent felt that it helped them to advance in their present job. Thirty of the 49 respondents were employed in an agriculture related field and half of the respondents planned further formal education.

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Introduction

Supervised Occupational Experience Programs have long been included in vocational agriculture programs. Vocational agriculture in Montana has included four major instructional components which are designed to provide adequate instruction to those students enrolled in the program. These parts include, (1) Agricultural Mechanics, (2) Agricultural Science, (3) Leadership, and (4) Supervised Occupational Experience Programs. All of these areas are important for the training of an individual for his or her life's work. By leaving out any one of the areas of the curriculum, a student may be robbed of the valuable training needed to compete favorably in the labor market.

One area in particular which has had the most recent controversy is the area of the Supervised Occupational Experience Program. Most Montana vocational agriculture instructors agree that SOE is an integral, necessary part of vocational education in agriculture. Williams(1) said that during the 1970's;

SOE was frequently identified as the weakest link, limiting (student) accomplishments not only through Supervised Occupational Education, but

also through classroom / laboratory instruction and the FFA.

He further stated that because of weak SOE programs, many students have not realized the full potential that vocational agriculture programs have to offer and that erosion of quality in many programs may have been the result.

The Smith-Hughes act requires by law that the students participating in vocational agriculture shall have an ongoing Supervised Occupational Experience Program for at least six months per year;

...that such schools shall provide for directed or supervised practice in agriculture, either on a farm provided by the school or on another farm, for at least six months per year...

This shows that Congress expected the program to be rather extensive in nature due to the time requirement.

The Vocational Agriculture Department at Belgrade High School has maintained the tradition of having SOEP's as a part of the vocational agriculture curriculum. Many students have gained from this experience as a part of their training. Belgrade students have had SOEP's which have included sheep, beef cattle, custom haying, dairy cattle, horses, gardening, logging, firewood cutting and hay production.

Some students conducted their SOE programs on the vocational agriculture department's chapter farm until 1978 when the FFA discontinued their land laboratory. Students did the chores on the farm which included moving sprinkler pipe, caring for livestock, haying, planting and harvesting grain as part of their SOEP.

Some students have also had various agriculturally related projects as SOEP's. These ranged from work at the local veterinary clinic to carpenter's helper to work in a small engine repair business as well as the traditional farm or ranch hand. Several other less traditional types of SOEP's have been conducted such as trapping animals for fur, maintaining lawns, work in the produce department of a grocery store, auto body repair or as apprentice machinest.

One of the main purposes of the SOE program is the preparation of the student for employment in agriculture or agribusiness. Therefore, the SOEP carried on by the vocational agriculture student should be in a work situation, preferably in an area of work in which the student has declared an interest. The researcher questioned the quality and the quantity of those SOEP's as being somewhat less than ideal. The researcher has determined the nature of past projects by reviewing the Final Report on Farm Experience and Agriculture Related Occupational Experience. A review of these project reports revealed some SOE projects to include such jobs as dishwasher, french

fryer, drive-up window operator, washing cars, janitor's helper, bus boy, janitor, delivery boy, babysitting and refinishing furniture.

The question is whether or not the SOEP activities which were conducted in the past actually helped the students acquire skills that enabled them to advance in agriculturally related jobs. If these activities are adequate to achieve the goal of the vocational agriculture department, which is to develop in the students those skills, attitudes and abilities necessary to succeed in the world of work, then we must be doing our job as instructors. If the activities we presently use as SOEP's are insufficient to achieve these goals, then it becomes necessary to modify the SOEP's so that the students do gain the needed knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences.

If we are to achieve quality in our education system we must strive to meet the highest standards of our profession. Therefore the vocational agriculture program must strive to meet standards set forth by the original policy law makers. More recently, the profession adopted vocational standards for the profession entitled "Standards for Quality Programs in Agriculture/Agribusiness Education" which were proposed by the U.S. Office of Education in Washington, D.C.. These standards which stress quality SOE programs are intended to help students successfully enter and advance in the world of work.

If local programs are to succeed at providing quality education for the students, instructors should take a critical look at each phase of a program and examine it for its quality and productivity. It is the intent of the researcher to carefully evaluate the SOE program at Belgrade High School. This study may prove useful to other teachers who wish to look critically at their local vocational agriculture program.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will be to seek information from those students who graduated from the Belgrade High School during the years 1974 through 1984 and who participated in the total vocational agriculture program, regarding the nature of their SOEP program, the effect their SOEP activities had on their occupational choice and the extent to which SOEP activities conducted while in high school caused them to seek further education or training in preparation for an occupation.

Need for the Study

The Belgrade Vocational Agriculture Department has included SOEP's as an integral part of the curriculum for many years. With the present student population shifting from rural to urban there has been an apparent decline in the availability, frequency and quality of SOEP's being

conducted by the students. In 1978 the Belgrade FFA lost its lease on a chapter farm where some students gained agricultural experience.

There were three reasons which caused the researcher to be concerned about the changing pattern of the SOE program. Because there was only one vocational agriculture instructor, it was determined that the chapter farm should be discontinued. This decision eliminated an on-the-farm work station that could be used for the benefit of several students.

This loss of the land laboratory created a need for more agribusiness work stations, which were limited in Belgrade. In 1978, the economy had slowed down and the local businesses did not hire part-time student labor as often as they had previously. At the beginning of the ten year period covered by the study (1974-1984), there were two vocational agriculture instructors employed at Belgrade High School. During this period, both instructors left the teaching profession and engaged in other activities. Because of these circumstances it became necessary to change the types of activities which are included in the SOEP.

With the present decline in numbers of SOEP's in the Belgrade High School Vocational Agriculture program and the ever-present need for accountability, it becomes necessary to take a critical look at the effectiveness of student SOEP's. By reviewing the kinds and the quality of SOEP's

that have been used in the past, data can be gathered that will provide information needed to evaluate the present program. These results will then be used to revise, upgrade and give new direction to the program.

This study will provide data to help evaluate the SOEP of Belgrade High School and could possibly provide other vocational agriculture instructors across the state with a useful tool to use in evaluating their own SOE programs. This study can be used as a follow-up tool to supplement other instruments already being used by the department instructor. Determining the type and scope of the SOEP activities along with the influence this training has had on the student's career choice or choice of further training, should help the instructor make some decisions as to the value of the activity in question. The instructor may then wish to modify the activity or drop it all together and pursue a different activity if it will improve the quality of instruction.

Objectives for the Study

The major objectives of this study will be to seek information from those students who graduated from Belgrade High School and participated in the total vocational agriculture program including all four topic areas (Ag Mechanics, Ag Science, FFA, and SOEP) between the years 1974 through 1984 to determine:

1. the nature and scope of their SOEP activities
2. the effect of their SOEP activities on the occupations in which they have participated since graduation, and,
3. the effect of SOEP activities on student participation in additional education and training opportunities following graduation from high school.

ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions will be used during this study:

1. There will be a large enough return of the questionnaire to allow this researcher to make some judgements and/or recommendations based on the data received.
2. The data received will be usable.
3. Those individuals receiving the survey will be able to recall having participated in the SOE program and will be able to remember details about the SOEP they had while in high school.

Limitations

The following limitations shall be observed to limit the scope of this study:

1. The study was limited to graduates from Belgrade High School who participated in the total vocational agriculture program during the ten year period from 1974 through 1984.
2. The study was limited to those vocational agriculture students who appeared as having had a Supervised Occupational Experience project on the State Form 2 and who were also listed on the State FFA membership roster.

Definitions

Program- The combination of those activities conducted as part of vocational education, which includes classroom instruction, laboratory exercises, leadership development through FFA, and supervised occupational experience. May also be defined as those scheduled activities conducted as a part of the Supervised Occupational Experience Program (SOEP).

Total Program- The complete combination of all activities included in the vocational agriculture program, including Ag Science, Ag Mechanics, FFA, and Supervised Occupational Experience.

Occupational Choice- That occupation which the student has selected and has become engaged in.

Additional Education- That education which the student has received since graduation from high school or that education which the student has plans to pursue at a later time than the time of the study.

Methodology

A need for this study was confirmed based on the researcher's personal experience, a review of literature, and consultation with the Agricultural Education staff at Montana State University. The objectives for the study were developed based on the purpose of the study.

The respondent's names and a description of their participation were collected from three sources. Participation in the SOE Program was taken from the "Final Report on Farm Experience and Agriculture Related Occupational Experience" (Form 2) from the State FFA Advisor's Office. FFA enrollment data were acquired from the State FFA Advisor's copy of the Future Farmers of America Membership Roster. Telephone questionnaires were used to collect information from those graduates of Belgrade High School who were selected. In the event the former student had no phone or was unlikely to be near a particular phone as suggested by the parent or relative who was contacted by the researcher, a mail questionnaire was sent

to follow up that student. Survey instruments were mailed after all efforts to reach the former student by phone had failed.

The criteria for participant selection stated that the student must have; (1) graduated from Belgrade High School, and (2) participated in all phases of the vocational agriculture program between the years 1974 and 1984. This was done to insure that the sample population had been a part of the total instructional program which was offered at the time each of the students were in high school.

The questionnaire was developed by the researcher with assistance from his advisor, Dr. Max Amberson, Department Head and Dr. Douglas Bishop, Professor of Agricultural Education. These persons reviewed the drafts of the questionnaire and made suggestions for its improvement. The instrument was reviewed by two vocational agriculture instructors who were attending MSU during the summer quarter of 1984. These two individuals were Mr. Ken Mapston and Mr. Bill Taylor. The researcher then administered the instrument via telephone to the population using suitable explanations to each former student as needed.

An extensive effort was put forth to locate all of the students in the sample. Addresses were located using the FFA Membership Roster to locate where the student lived while in high school. The telephone directory was employed to locate as many of the students as possible. High School

Administrators Tom Fikani, Principal, and Pat Kramerich, Assistant Principal, were interviewed to confirm family lineage of the students, and the high school permanent records were checked for parents names.

Data were tabulated on master sheets, compiled into tables, and then analyzed, results are appear in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER II

THE REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Educational Literature

The Supervised Occupational Experience Program is an integral part of the vocational agriculture program. The intent of this area is to provide the job experience that the student needs to succeed in holding a job. The Smith-Hughes Act, (Phipps, 1972 p.575) which established vocational agriculture in the secondary schools, says several things about that program;

. . . that the controlling purpose of such education shall be to fit (students) for useful employment; that such education shall be of less than college grade and be designed to meet the needs of persons over fourteen years of age who have entered upon or who are preparing to enter upon the work of the farm or of the farm home. . . that such schools shall provide for directed or supervised practice in agriculture, either on a farm provided by the school or on another farm, for at least six months per year...

The above quote states that the secondary vocational agriculture programs should provide vocational training for students over fourteen years old for employment and that

they were to use a supervised farming program as part of the training.

The Vocational Education Act of 1963 (Phipps, 1972, p.579) supplied funding for vocational programs, including vocational agriculture, and allowed funding to the program with or without supervised farming programs and whether or not all of the instruction was aimed at farming. This allowed for the addition of other areas of instruction which could include training for agribusiness occupations.

. . .(b) any amounts allotted (or apportioned) under such titles, Act, or Acts for agriculture may be used for vocational education in any occupation involving knowledge and skills in agricultural subjects, whether or not such occupation involves work of the farm or of the farm home, and such education may be provided without directed or supervised experience on a farm;. . . (p.579)

With the addition of agriculture related activities to the SOE program, students could gain work experience in off farm occupations. Both areas were deemed necessary to train the students in those desirable occupational and educational values as well as the needed skills, attitudes and abilities which the student needed to succeed in the world of work.

Supervised Occupational Experience programs provide systematic instruction by the teachers, parents, employers, and others consisting of all the practical agriculture activities of educational value conducted outside of class.

The importance of the supervised occupational experience program is summed up by Phipps (1972, p.188) as follows;

...They are exceedingly beneficial to high school pupils, as well as to a community. Good occupational experience programs are one of the best ways of giving agricultural education and a teacher of agriculture favorable publicity and of making agriculture courses a permanent part of a community's secondary school educational program. Supervised occupational experience programs are attractive, interesting, and educational to pupils, parents, and others. On the other hand, if a teacher does not do an effective job with supervised occupational experience programs, there may be much unfavorable criticism of the program of vocational education in agriculture.

Most vocational agriculture instructors have held the view that the SOE program is an integral part of the vocational agriculture program. Leising and Zilbert (1983) noted that in California, vocational agriculture programs averaged 57.1 percent participation as perceived by the instructors. The student sample showed that 68.2 percent of the students perceived that they had a SOEP. The data showed numbers of programs with 75 percent or more participation in SOEP's and those programs with less than 75 percent. This researcher noted that the figures presented showed that 66.25 percent of the California vocational agriculture programs included in the study had less than 75 percent participation in the SOE program. The degree of commitment to the SOE program by this group of instructors could be questionable.

Williams (1979) said that although the vocational agriculture teaching profession advocates the use of SOEP's, the apparent erosion of the SOE program in recent years has put this belief into question. This conflict between theory and practice prompted him to investigate the beliefs that students held with regard to the benefits they received from the SOEP's in which they engaged.

Williams' (1979) work centered on the 1977 graduates of Iowa high schools who had received either the Chapter Farmer Degree or the State Farmer Degree as their highest FFA degree earned while in high school. He noted several of the characteristics of the two groups;

1. Ninety-eight percent of the State Farmers and eighty-six percent of the Chapter Farmers lived on a farm while in High school.
2. Ninety percent of the State Farmers and seventy-three percent of the Chapter Farmers had completed four years of Vocational Agriculture.
3. Fifty-two percent of the State Farmers planned to farm or were farming as compared to forty-one percent of the Chapter Farmers.
.....
7. Ninety-eight percent of the State Farmers and eighty percent of the Chapter Farmers had participated in supervised farming programs.
8. Sixty percent of the State Farmers and fifty-nine percent of the Chapter Farmers had participated in placement type SOE's.
.....
10. Seventy-one percent of the State Farmers and sixty-four percent of the Chapter Farmers had farming as their major SOE.

-
14. Ninety percent of the State Farmers as compared to seventy-five percent of the Chapter Farmers thought that they received adequate help from their advisor.
 15. Eighty-seven percent of the State Farmers and sixty-nine percent of the Chapter Farmers remembered having one or more annual SOE visits from the instructor.

These characteristics at least partially supported the conclusion drawn by Leising and Zilbert (1983) that the student factors of level of FFA participation, application for FFA awards or degrees, membership in the FFA, and required record book were significantly associated with student participation in SOEP's.

Williams (1979) also listed by rank the benefits the students of both groups perceived they derived from SOE;

- Encouraged the keeping of records.
- Promoted the acceptance of responsibility.
- Developed a pride in ownership.
- Helped attain advanced degrees.
- Encouraged the production of animals and crops.
- Developed skills needed by people in farming.
- Provided an opportunity to make decisions.
- Promoted an interest in agricultural studies.
- Provided an opportunity to learn on your own.
- Developed self-confidence.

After compiling the data, Williams concluded that;

.....

Only about one-half of the combined groups had plans for formal education beyond high school.

The SOE programs for both chapter farmers and state farmers were production oriented. Supervised

farming programs were the dominant type of SOE in both groups.

.
SOE programs were beneficial to students, not only in the development of knowledge and skills, but also in the development of desirable occupational and educational attitudes and values.

SOE programs were more beneficial to students in areas related to production agriculture than areas related to agribusiness.

Williams (1979) recommended that additional research is needed to help identify the benefits that other groups of former vocational agriculture students have received from SOE programs.

In a study done in 1982, Zurbrick (1982) continued research on SOEP. He contended that the scope of the student's SOE program may be more important in determining the value derived from such an experience than is the percent of student participation. He stated in his study that as many as thirty-six percent of the students participating in vocational agriculture programs in California had no SOE program in operation. Zurbrick (1982) studied the students taking vocational agriculture in Arizona during the 1981- 1982 school year. After he devised an index system for gaging the scope of the population's SOEP's, he concluded the following;

1. The percentage of SOE program participation by students enrolled in vocational agriculture does not vary by grade levels in Arizona.

2. The location of the student's home influences, in some cases, the scope of a student's SOE programs. . . .
3. Current standards for scope of SOE programs which increase with the student's experience in vocational agriculture are realistic in terms of actual practices.

The standards referred to by Zurbrick (1982) included the hours or units of production of the student's SOE program as well as an improvement project and supplementary practices. Zurbrick's research contributed a method to measure the scope of the student SOE programs. This allowed him to quantify the data from the group and compare it to a standard which was set for the state. This comparison allowed him to verify that the standards were realistic.

Literature Summary

The literature appeared to bear out the following points in relation to this study:

1. The lawmakers who originated the legislation which is related to the vocational agriculture program intended that supervised occupational education programs should be an integral part of the vocational agriculture program.
2. Most vocational agriculture instructors agree that SOEP's are beneficial to the students that participate in the program.

3. A large portion of the students enrolled in vocational agriculture do not have SOE programs as part of their training while in high school.
4. A high percentage of the students who had achieved higher awards and recognition in the FFA also had participated in SOE programs.
5. Those who had received awards for SOE related activities felt that they had received several benefits from their activities.
6. There is a significant relationship between the quality of the SOE program and the benefits received by the student from such activities.

CHAPTER III

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Population Information

This chapter includes a summary of data received through survey from students who graduated from Belgrade High School from 1974 to 1984 and participated in the total vocational agriculture program offered at the time the students were in high school.

A total of 49 or 74.2 percent of the 66 former students were interviewed by telephone. The data in Table 1 shows the response received from the sixty-six students interviewed.

Table 1

Population Response Rate N=66

Response	Number Contacted	Number Received	Percent
Deceased	1	0	1.5
Unlocated	5	0	7.6
Sent letters	6	0	9.1
No Contact	5	0	7.6
Interviewed	49	49	74.2

Each former student was asked their age during the interview. The data in Table 2 shows the ages of the population at the time of the study. This information was requested to enable the researcher to estimate the length of time the former student had been out of high school.

Table 2
Ages of Former Students

Age	Number	Percentage
18-20	13	26.5
21-23	19	38.8
24-26	17	34.7
27-29	0	0.0
Total	49	100.0

As can be noted 19 or 38.8 percent of the students were 21 to 23 years of age, 17 or 34.7 percent were between 24 and 26 and 13 or 26.5 percent were 18 to 20 years old. The data in Table 3 was presented to ascertain the percent of the respondents that were employed in an agriculture related job.

The data indicate that 8 or 16.3 percent of the students one year out of school were in agriculture related jobs, while 6 or 12.2 percent who had been out of school four years were in the same area. Thirty-two or 65.2 percent of the 49 responding were in agriculture related

jobs while 17 or 34.6 percent were in non-agriculture related jobs.

Table 3

Relationship Between Years Since Graduation and
Employment in Ag Related Jobs and Non-Ag Related Jobs
N=49

Years Since Graduation	Ag Related Job		Non-Ag Related Job	
	No.	%	No.	%
0	0	0.0	2	4.1
1	8	16.3	3	6.1
2	2	4.1	0	0.0
3	3	6.1	2	4.1
4	6	12.2	2	4.1
5	3	6.1	1	2.0
6	2	4.1	6	12.2
7	3	6.1	1	2.0
8	5	10.2	0	0.0
Total	32	65.2	17	34.6

Note: The percentages in this table are rounded figures.

The respondents were asked the number of years they had attended Belgrade High School. The data contained in Table 4 show that 42 former students or 85.7 percent of the population had attended for all four years. A review of the data presented indicate that all graduates in the study completed an average of 3.82 years of their education at Belgrade High School.

The former students were asked the number of years they had participated in the vocational agriculture program while they were in high school, including those years they may

have spent at another high school. Thirty-five of the respondents indicated that they had participated in the vocational agriculture program for four years. Another 11 or 22.5 percent said that they had been in vocational agriculture for three years. The average number of years in vocational agriculture for the total group was 3.63 years.

Table 4

Years of Participation in Vocational Agriculture
While Attending Belgrade High School N=49

Activity	Number of Years									
	One		Two		Three		Four		Mean	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Attended Belgrade High School	0	0	2	4.1	5	10.2	42	85.7	3.82	
Participation in Vocational Agriculture	1	2.0	2	4.1	11	22.5	35	71.4	3.63	

The former students were asked the length of their involvement in years in the FFA. This data appears in Table 5. As can be noted 18 or 36.74 percent were enrolled in FFA for four years, while 16 or 32.65 percent were enrolled for two years.

A few of the respondents offered an explanation for their term of membership during their interview. They suggested that at the time they dropped out of the FFA, the

organization had become unpopular among the high school students. Another reason was that the students were more involved in other activities, so they terminated their involvement with the FFA.

SOEP Information

A review of the data in Table 5 shows that an equal number, 14 or 28.57 percent of the respondents had participated in SOEP for one or two years while enrolled in vocational agriculture. Thirteen or 26.53 percent of the respondents had participated in SOEP for four years. Only two of the 49 respondents indicated that they had not participated in the SOE program during any of the years they took vocational agriculture.

Table 5

Years of Membership in FFA and Years
of Time Participating in SOEP N=49

Years	Length of FFA Membership		Years Enrolled in SOEP	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
One Year	4	8.16	14	28.57
Two Years	16	32.65	14	28.57
Three Years	11	22.45	6	12.25
Four Years	18	36.74	13	26.53
Did Not Participate	0	0.00	2	4.08

After ascertaining that the former students perceived that they had a SOE program during high school, they were asked to indicate the general area of their project. The results of that question are presented in Table 6. Several of the respondents indicated that they had more than one project as part of their SOEP. For the group as a whole, there were a total of 66 projects. Two of the respondents did not participate in the SOE program so they were unable to respond to any further questions relative to the SOE program even though their names appeared on the SOE Form 2 filed with the State Department of Vocational Education.

Table 6

Student Perception of Area of SOEP
and Recordbook Requirement N=66

Area	SOEP Area		Records Required?					
			Yes		No		Forgot	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
A. Ag Production	25	37.9	17	25.8	8	12.1	0	0.0
B. Farm Placement	28	42.4	13	19.7	13	19.0	2	3.0
C. Ag Related	12	18.2	5	7.6	7	10.6	0	0.0
D. Other	1	1.5	0	0.0	1	1.5	0	0.0
Total	66	100.0	35	53.1	29	43.2	2	3.0

NOTE: Students may have responded to more than one.

As the data in Table 6 indicates, 53.1 percent of the students were required by the vocational agriculture

Table 7

Jobs or Activities in Which Students
Participated as Part of Their SOEP

Job or Activity	Number	Percentage	
		Projects N= 86	Students N= 47
FFA Chapter Farm	21	24.4	44.7
Farm Hand	11	12.8	23.4
Sheep Project	10	11.6	21.3
Beef Cattle Project	9	10.5	19.1
Grain Project	7	8.1	14.9
Swine Project	4	4.7	8.5
Dairy Cattle Project	2	2.3	4.3
FFA Farm Manager	2	2.3	4.3
Sub Total	66	76.7	*
Mechanic	2	2.3	4.3
Parts Man	2	2.3	4.3
Artist	1	1.2	2.1
City Worker	1	1.2	2.1
Construction	1	1.2	2.1
Experiment Station	1	1.2	2.1
FFA Greenhouse	1	1.2	2.1
Gas Station Attendant	1	1.2	2.1
Hay Project	1	1.2	2.1
Horse Project	1	1.2	2.1
Janitor	1	1.2	2.1
Lawnskeeper	1	1.2	2.1
Logger	1	1.2	2.1
Lumber Mill Worker	1	1.2	2.1
Poultry Project	1	1.2	2.1
Rabbit Project	1	1.2	2.1
Vet Clinic	1	1.2	2.1
Weldor	1	1.2	2.1
Total	86	100.0	*

* Since the students responded to more than one activity, a total percentage here would be inaccurate.

Note: The percentages in this table are rounded figures and therefore do not total exactly 100 percent.

instructor to keep a record book on their project. The

percentage of those respondents who had production projects was the highest with 25.8 percent. Nineteen and seven tenths percent of those students who had farm placement projects kept record books, while 5 or 7.6 percent with agriculture related projects kept records. Forty-three and two tenths percent of the former students who had SOE projects in agriculture production, placement, or related areas did not keep record books.

Data in Table 7 presents a list of the jobs or activities in which the respondents indicated they had their SOE projects. This list represents 86 activities in which the 47 former students, who had SOE projects and who responded to the survey, reported projects.

The greatest number, 21 or 44.7 percent of the respondents, indicated their SOE project was on the FFA chapter farm. The next highest group, 11 or 23.4 percent, worked as farm hands on farms or ranches belonging to relatives or friends. Of the balance of the SOE projects, 10 or 21.3 percent were raising sheep, 9 or 19.1 percent were raising beef, and 7 or 14.9 percent were grain projects.

Of the 86 projects, 66 or 76.7 percent were in agricultural production. The percentages shown in Table 7 were calculated both on the basis of 47 participants and the 86 different projects. This was done to show both the

percent of the respondents with projects and the percent of projects in each area.

In an effort to determine the size of the respondent's SOE programs, each respondent was asked to indicate the scope of their project. The projects in the agricultural production area were the only ones that were specific enough to use in this study. Data in Table 8 shows the areas of the projects and the approximate scope. The larger size

Table 8

Scope of SOE Production Enterprises											N=47	
Enterprise	1-5		6-10		11-25		26-50		50-100		>100	
	Head		Head		Head		Head		Head		Head	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Livestock												
Beef	3	6.4	-	-	2	4.3	-	-	-	-	5	10.6
Dairy	1	2.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2.1	-	-
Horses	1	2.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poultry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2.1
Rabbits	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2.1	-	-	-	-
Sheep	3	6.4	1	2.1	4	8.5	1	2.1	1	2.1	-	-
Swine	2	4.3	-	-	1	2.1	-	-	1	2.1	-	-
Total	10	21.3	1	2.1	7	14.9	2	4.2	3	6.3	6	12.7
Enterprise	0-50		51-300		301-600		601-1000					
	Acres		Acres		Acres		Acres					
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Crops												
Grain	1	2.1	1	2.1	3	6.4	3	6.4				
Hay	-	-	-	-	2	4.3	-	-				
Total	1	2.1	1	2.1	5	10.7	3	6.4				

projects were almost all related to work on the parent's farm. Ten or 21.3 percent of the students indicated the scope of their projects to be from one to 25 head in the livestock areas while six persons or 12.7 percent indicated having over 100 head of livestock.

Ten students reported crop projects. One ownership was 50 acres of grain. The balance of students had farm placement SOE projects; 5 or 10.6 percent were farms of 301 to 600 acres.

Data in Table 9 display the kinds of SOE agribusiness activity in which students participated. Fourteen of the respondents indicated they have had agribusiness SOE projects. Four or 28.6 percent of the former students used self employment as their SOE project.

Table 9

Ag Business SOEP Activities N=14

Major Job or Activity	Number	Percent
Construction	1	7.14
Experiment Station	1	7.14
FFA Greenhouse	1	7.14
Lawnskeeper	1	7.14
Logger	1	7.14
Mill Worker	1	7.14
Parts Man	2	14.28
Vet Clinic	1	7.14
Weldor	1	7.14
Self Employed	4	28.57
Total	14	100.00

Note: The percentages in this table are rounded figures.

During the interview students were asked to enumerate the jobs which they have had since graduating from high school; these data appear in Table 10.

Table 10

Jobs Held Since High School N=49

Job	Past Job Title		Present Job Title	
	No.	%	No.	%
Farm Laborer	24	50.0	15	30.6
Truck Driver	5	10.2	6	12.2
Mill Worker	-	-	4	8.2
Construction	10	20.4	3	6.1
Cook	2	4.1	3	6.1
Parts Man	7	14.3	3	6.1
Logger	2	4.1	2	4.1
Mechanic	3	6.1	2	4.1
Warehouseman	3	6.1	2	4.1
Artist	-	-	1	2.0
Body Man	-	-	1	2.0
City Worker	-	-	1	2.0
Clerk	6	12.2	1	2.0
Insulation Worker	-	-	1	2.0
Janitor	-	-	1	2.0
Landscape Worker	1	2.0	1	2.0
Law Enforcement	1	2.0	1	2.0
Oil Worker	7	16.3	1	2.0
Service Station	2	4.1	1	2.0
Soil Cons. Service	1	2.0	1	2.0
Airplane Service Mgr.	1	2.0	-	-
Bar Tender	1	2.0	-	-
Farm Manager	1	2.0	-	-
Forest Service	1	2.0	-	-
Lumber/steel Yard Worker	3	6.1	-	-
National Guard	2	4.1	-	-
Telephone Worker	1	2.0	-	-
Truck Wash	1	2.0	-	-
Tugboat Engineer	1	2.0	-	-
Weldor	2	4.0	-	-
Total	88		51	

Occupation Information

Data in Table 10 indicate that 49 respondents had held jobs since graduation. The table also indicates the present jobs which they now hold. A review of the present jobs held by the respondents shows that 15 or 30.6 percent are currently farm or ranch laborers while 6 or 12.2 percent and 4 or 8.2 percent are truck drivers and mill workers respectively. It should be noted that 24 or 50 percent of the students had worked as farm laborers some time since graduation. The balance were in a variety of jobs not usually considered agricultural in nature.

The respondents were asked to indicate the level of their activities in their present job. This data appears in Table 11. As the data show, 8 or 16.3 percent of the 49

Table 11

Level at Which Students Were Employed
N=49

Position	Number	Percent
A. Managerial	8	16.3
B. Supervisory	7	14.3
C. Technical	2	4.1
D. Sales	9	18.4
E. Office	5	10.2
F. Service	8	16.3
G. Skilled	32	65.3
H. Unskilled	14	28.6
I. Other	1	2.0
Total	49	

respondents indicated they have managerial tasks to complete as part of their job.

Thirty-two or 65.3 percent of the respondents fell into the "skilled" level category while 14 or 28.6 percent were classified as "unskilled". The one person who fell into the "other" category was a deputy sheriff.

Education Information

To determine if the SOE area influenced educational level attained by the former students, they were asked to indicate the level of education they had attained since graduation from high school. The data as categorized in Table 12 show that 21 or 42.9 percent of the respondents had attended some college at the time of the study. Nineteen or 38.8 percent of the group had received no formal education beyond high school. Other forms of formal education accounted for 3 or 6.1 percent Vo-Tech, 2 or 4.1 percent Trade School, and 1 or 2.0 percent apprenticeship. The category labeled "other", consisting of 3 or 6.1 percent, referred to company sponsored schools or mini-workshops such as artificial insemination breeding schools, and diesel injector schools.

Data in Table 12 also shows how former students perceived formal education. Twenty-four or 50 percent of the respondents had some plans to attend more college level courses or to pursue a degree. With the exception of two or

4.1 percent of the respondents who planned to attend a trade school, the balance of the respondents had no plans for further formal education.

Table 12

Educational Level Attained by Respondents N=49

Level	Education Received Since High School		Education Planned in Future	
	No.	%	No.	%
A. College	21	42.9	24	50.0
B. Vo-Tech	3	6.1	0	0.0
C. Trade School	2	4.1	2	4.1
D. Apprentice	1	2.0	0	0.0
E. Other	3	6.1	0	0.0
No further education	19	38.8	-	-
No plans for further Education	-	-	23	46.9

Perception of SOE Benefits

Forty-seven respondents who acknowledged having a SOE program while in high school were asked to indicate the degree of benefit they felt they received from the SOEP. Data in Table 13 were arranged depending how respondents perceived the benefits received from the SOE program. During the process of analyzing the data the responses were changed to a numerical scale with five being equivalent to "helped a lot" and one being equivalent to "helped not at all". This scale was used to determine the means for the responses.

Data in Table 13 also indicates the students' perception of the degree of help received from the advisor visitations.

As can be noted, 18 or 38.3 percent of the former students felt that SOE projects helped them a lot. The bulk of the rest of the responses fell somewhere in the middle, or "helped somewhat" with the mean for this response being 3.8.

Table 13

Perception of Selected SOE Benefits N=47

	Helped A Lot		Helped		Helped Some- what		Helped Very Little		Helped Not At All	
SOEP	5		4		3		2		1	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
General Experience Mean = 3.8	18	38.3	10	21.3	13	27.7	4	8.4	2	4.3
Helped to Get First Job Mean = 2.6	13	27.7	2	4.3	5	10.6	8	17.0	19	40.4
Advancement in Present Job Mean = 2.7	9	19.1	5	10.6	10	21.3	8	17.0	15	31.9
Visitation Helped Mean = 2.9	11	23.4	9	19.2	7	14.9	4	8.5	16	34.0

Note: The percentages in this table are rounded figures.

On the question of whether or not SOEP experiences were helpful in obtaining their first job, there was indication

that it did. Thirteen or 27.7 percent indicated that their SOEP helped a lot while 19 or 40.4 percent indicated that SOEP helped not at all. The mean response for this question was 2.6. The most common response during the interview was that there was very little relationship between the project that they had as a SOEP and their present job.

When asked if the experiences the former student had as part of their SOEP helped to advance in their present job, the responses were mixed. Fifteen or 31.9 percent of the respondents felt that the SOEP experiences had very little to do with any advancement in their job, however 10 or 21.3 percent said SOE helped somewhat and 9 or 19.1 percent said SOE helped a lot. The mean rating for this question was 2.7.

Perception of Advisor Visitations

When asked about the helpfulness of the advisor's visitations, 16 or 34 percent felt that the advisor's visits were no help at all. Eleven or 23.4 percent of the respondents indicated the visits helped a lot. Students, during the interview, commented that the family knew more about the SOE project than did the advisor. Others felt that the visits had little to do with the SOEP. The biggest single cause for the "no help at all" rating was that the former student felt that the advisor did not visit the SOEP at all.

The respondents were also asked how many visitations they received during the year at the site of their SOEP and how long in terms of hours the visitations lasted. Data in Table 14 shows the responses of the 47 former students who indicated that they had participated in a SOE program. Fourteen or 29.8 percent of the respondents indicated that they received one visitation per year. Ten or 21.3 percent

Table 14

Number of Advisor Visitations Per Year N=47

Number Visitations	Number	Percent
One	14	29.8
2 - 5	10	21.3
5 or More	11	23.4
None At All	12	25.5

Table 15

Time Spent by Advisor During Visitation N=47

Hours Spent	Number	Percent
Less than 1 hr	9	19.2
1 to 1-1/2 hrs	15	31.9
1-1/2 to 2 hrs	5	10.6
2 to 3 hrs	4	8.5
More than 3 hrs	2	4.3
No time at all*	12	25.5

*Note: This category was not a response on the questionnaire.

indicated that they received two to five visits, while 12 or 25.5 percent never received a visitation at the site of their SOE project.

Data in Table 15 shows the responses by the former students relative to how much time the advisor spent during most visitations. Twelve or 25.5 percent of the 47 respondents who had participated in SOE programs indicated that they had never received a visitation. Data in Table 15 were prepared to indicate time spent by the advisor during visitations.

As the data indicate, 15 or 31.9 percent indicated that the advisor spent an hour to an hour and a half with the former student during a visit. Two or 4.3 percent of the respondents indicated that the advisor spent more than three hours with them during a visitation.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Based on the responses of the former students who participated in this study, the following conclusions have been formulated:

- A. Conclusions regarding the nature and scope of the SOEP activities conducted by the study population.
 1. Eighty-six projects were reported by 47 former students in the population studied. Seventy-six and seven tenths percent of them were farm placement or ownership, the balance, 23.3 percent, were in agribusiness. Sixty-nine percent of the projects were in animal agriculture, with from one to fifty animals being reported. One ownership type crop project was reported. Respondents indicated that the advisor visitations were of little or no help to their SOE program. Twenty-five percent said that they had received no visitations.

B. Conclusions regarding the relationship between SOEP activities and the occupations in which former students have participated in since graduation.

1. Thirty-two or 65.2 percent of the former students surveyed are or have been employed in an agricultural pursuit since graduation from high school.
2. Twenty-eight or 59.6 percent of the former students who indicated that they had participated in a SOE program believed that the SOEP was of some help in getting their first job and 32 or 68.1 percent indicated that SOEP had some effect on their advancement.

C. Conclusions regarding the relationship between SOE activities and the participation of former students in additional education and training following graduation from high school.

1. Thirty or 61.2 percent of the respondents indicated that they had engaged in some form of formal education beyond high school. Twenty-one or 42.9 percent said they had attended some college.
2. Nineteen or 38.8 percent of the respondents had gone into the workforce without any additional education beyond high school.

3. Twenty-four or 50 percent of the respondents planned to take college level courses at some time in the future while 23 or 46.9 percent of the respondents planned no further formal education.

Implications

From the study conclusions the researcher has drawn the following implications:

1. Supervised Occupational Experience projects conducted at Belgrade High School appear to have had the most impact on the former student when they were conducted in the agricultural production areas.
2. Prior to 1978, the Belgrade FFA Chapter Farm provided valuable SOEP opportunities which are no longer available due to its discontinuance.
3. The SOE programs that were conducted at Belgrade High School over the ten years studied were of sufficient quality to influence the former student's occupational choice.
4. The number and quality of the advisor visitations should be considered so as to provide better assistance to student SOE projects.

5. The Supervised Occupational Experience Program at Belgrade High School could be upgraded through the following means:

- a. Students should plan their SOE programs in the occupational areas in which the student has occupational aspirations.
- b. Expand the scope of the SOE projects so that students receive more responsibility.

Recommendations For Further Study

The following recommendations for further study are suggested as a result of this research.

1. Examine the effect of the SOE on program graduates who did not participate in all phases of the vocational agriculture curriculum. Such a study would allow a comparison between those students who participated in the total program and those who participated to varying degrees.
2. Determine the specific competencies that the SOE program should provide vocational agriculture graduates in relation to jobs which they enter upon graduation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Cover Letter

TO:

Former FFA Members who had Supervised Occupational
Experience projects while in High School

From:

Roger Hendrickson

Vocational Agriculture Instructor

Belgrade High School

P.O.Box 166

Belgrade, MT 59714

Mr. (Ms) _____

I would appreciate your help in gathering information about the past activities that students have carried out as their Supervised Occupational Experience Programs (SOEP's) while enrolled in high school vocational agriculture. With this information, I will be able to determine if the SOE program is helping the students obtain employment.

First let me explain that this information will be used to improve the Supervised Occupational Experience part of the vocational agriculture program. This is the place where we try to build in the student the work ethic; those attitudes and abilities they need to succeed in the world of work. The SOEP will usually require the student to have some sort of project for which he will work, manage, and

keep records. It may involve raising barley or hogs, or it might be work in an agribusiness such as a machinery dealership.

With the improvement of the SOE program in mind, I hope to find out from those students who graduated and were involved in all phases of the vocational agriculture program;

- a. The nature and scope of their SOEP activities
- b. The effect of their SOEP activities on the occupational choice in which they have participated since graduation
- c. The effect of SOEP activities on their participation in additional education and training opportunities since graduation from high school.

Your cooperation with this survey will help me to improve the instruction the students receive as the SOE program. Your help will be sincerely appreciated.

Thanks!

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire

SOEP QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME _____

YEAR OF GRADUATION _____

1. What is your present age?

_____ a.18-20

_____ b.21-23

_____ c.24-26

_____ d.27-29

2. How many years did you attend Belgrade High School?

_____ a.One

_____ b.Two

_____ c.Three

_____ d.Four

3. How many years did you participate in Vocational
Agriculture or Shop while in high school either at Belgrade
or at another high school?

_____ a.One

_____ b.Two

_____ c.Three

_____ d.Four

4. How long were you a member of FFA during your high
school career?

_____ a.One year

- _____ b. Two years
- _____ c. Three years
- _____ d. Four years
- _____ e. Was not a member.

5. For how long did you conduct a Supervised Occupational Experience project while you were enrolled in Vocational Agriculture?

- _____ a. One year
- _____ b. Two years
- _____ c. Three years
- _____ d. All four years.
- _____ e. Did not participate in this activity.

6. In which area(s) would you think your SOEP activity(ies) would best fit?

- _____ a. Agricultural Production (Growing crops or livestock)
- _____ b. Farm Placement (Working on someone's farm as a laborer)
- _____ c. Agriculture Related (Working for someone in an agriculture related business or owner/operator of an agribusiness.)
- _____ d. Other: _____

7. Were you required to keep a record book for the activity or activities you participated in as part of your SOEP?

_____ a.Yes

_____ b.No

_____ c.Don't remember.

8. List the jobs or activities in which you participated during your SOEP. Example: irrigator or raised livestock.

9. If your project was in Ag Production, indicate the scope or size of the program, such as how many acres, head, etc.

10. If your project was in Ag Business, indicate the major jobs or activities in which you participated. Example: Parts man, order delivery or floor sweeper.

11. Please indicate the title of your present job. _____

12. Indicate titles of the jobs you have held since high school graduation. Example: Truck driver, laborer, farm hand, board sorter

13. What are the major activities in which you participate during your present job.

POSITION

_____	a. Managerial	_____
_____	b. Supervisory	_____
_____	c. Technical	_____
_____	d. Sales	_____
_____	e. Office	_____

- | | | |
|-------|--------------|-------|
| _____ | f. Service | _____ |
| _____ | g. Skilled | _____ |
| _____ | h. Unskilled | _____ |
| _____ | i. Other | _____ |

14. Please list any education you have received since graduation from high school.

- a. College
- b. Vo-Tech
- c. Trade School
- d. Apprenticeship
- e. Other: _____

15. Please indicate the plans you have to persue further education.

- | | |
|-------|---|
| _____ | a.College |
| _____ | b.Vo-Tech |
| _____ | c.Trade School |
| _____ | d.Apprenticeship |
| _____ | e.No current plans for further education. |

16. As a general educational experience, how helpful were SOEP experiences in which you engaged during high school?

- | | |
|-------|-----------------------|
| _____ | a. Helped a lot |
| _____ | b. Helped |
| _____ | c. Helped somewhat |
| _____ | d. Helped very little |
| _____ | e. Helped not at all. |

17. To what extent were your SOEP experiences helpful in obtaining your first job?

- _____ a. Helped a lot
- _____ b. Helped
- _____ c. Helped somewhat
- _____ d. Helped very little
- _____ e. Helped not at all.

18. To what extent have your SOEP experiences helped you advance in your present job following initial employment?

- _____ a. Helped a lot
- _____ b. Helped
- _____ c. Helped somewhat
- _____ d. Helped very little
- _____ e. Helped not at all.

19. Did the Advisor's visitations help you with your SOEP?

- _____ a. Was a lot of help.
- _____ b. Helped
- _____ c. Was some help.
- _____ d. Was very little help.
- _____ e. Was no help at all.

20. How often did your advisor visit your SOE program?

- _____ a. 0-1 time per year
- _____ b. 2-5 times per year
- _____ c. 5 or more times per year.

_____ d. Not at all.

21. How long did your advisor spend at each visit?

_____ a. Less than 1 hour

_____ b. 1 to 1-1/2 hours

_____ c. 1-1/2 to 2 hours

_____ d. 2 to 3 hours

_____ e. More than 3 hours.