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2. Lessons of Leadership and Professionalism: A Workshop Series with Rotaract

3. Practice Paper

4. Abstract:

Graduate students developed a leadership training curriculum for a leadership theory course. The group developed a leadership training program with the university's Rotaract chapter. A series of workshops were implemented with the Rotaract chapter to provide leadership training. The workshops serve as a model for potential leadership development for other service-based organizations.

5. Biographical Profiles

Stephen Edwards is a Ph. D. Student in Agricultural and Extension Education at Virginia Tech University. Stephen's research interests include teacher effectiveness, teacher attrition and curriculum development.

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6. Yes, please print this report in the conference proceedings, if accepted.

7. If the manuscript is not accepted as a paper, the authors are willing to have the manuscript accepted as a poster.
8. Stephen Edwards and Eric Kaufman (the first and second authors) are willing to serve as reviewers for conference submissions.
9. Eric Kaufman (the second author) is willing to serve as a facilitator for the conference.

Lessons of Leadership and Professionalism: A Workshop Series with Rotaract

Introduction

Teaching leadership is one of the best ways to learn leadership (Jackson & Parry, 2008). Students also learn class concepts better when they have the opportunity to teach others (Lord, 2007). Thus began the odyssey of the graduate students as they sought to implement an action research leadership project with a local organization. The project needed to allow participants to gain insight into leadership practices that support theories. Coming from different educational backgrounds and bound together by two common bonds, one being a desire to develop a deeper understanding of leadership theory and a second being the requirement of enacting a project, the research team set out on a quest to create a meaningful leadership training experience for a group that needed leadership consultation. The project began as a classroom assignment and became a research practice that could be replicated with similar groups in the future. The following shares how this project positively affected a collegiate organization and how the leadership action project could serve as the foundation of successful leadership programs for similar organizations.

Literature Review

According to Dale (1969), having learners teach concepts to others is the most effective form of learning (Dale, 1969). The model states that after a period of two weeks, people learn retain on 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they say, 50% of what they see and say, but over 90% of what they say and do (Dale, 1969). The model has also been proven effective when memory retention is measured over a six week period, with participants still remembering 80 - 90% of the material that was taught to others (Lord, 2007). Because of the high retention rates present when teaching others, Dale's (1969) theory was applied to the leadership project.

Many college students have experienced service learning programs prior to entering the collegiate learning environment. A 2008 National study of elementary, middle and high school principals reported that 68% of their schools had students who participated in school recognized community activities (Spring, Grimm, & Dietz, 2008). In the same study, 86% of schools devoted at least part of their instructional time to community service activities (Spring, et al., 2008).

Students participating in service-based leadership projects benefit upon college graduation; the participants in service-based leadership programs are more likely to receive employment offers as opposed to their peers who did not participate in the programs (Fox, 2002). Comprehensive reviews of research on service learning reveal that service-learning has a positive effect on students' personal and interpersonal development including leadership skills and the ability to work well with others (Astin et al., 2006; Eyler, Giles Jr., Stenson, & Gray, 2001). Service-learning is proven to have a positive impact on students' academic learning as well as their career development and ability to apply what they have learned in the "real world" (Eyler, et al., 2001; Rhee & Honeycutt Sigler, 2010). Students can also develop management skills that are needed in organizations after graduation (Fairfield, 2010). The community received multiple

benefits where the service projects were implemented including: greater access to technology, media resources and financial literacy (Hannon, 2006; Heiselt & Wolverton, 2009; Rosacker, Ragothaman, & Gillispie, 2009).

Successful programs involving older collegiate students have also had positive results at the university level. A program from a small Midwestern college showed a great gain in financial literacy of college freshman when they attended workshops conducted by upperclassman in accounting majors (Rosacker, et al., 2009). Service based programs implemented by a small college's informational technology leadership major have resulted in technology benefits in the college's surrounding area (Hannon, 2006). A service based program facilitated by a Southern university involved undergraduate students working directly with the patrons of the local library near campus to provide access of the libraries materials to the community-at-large (Heiselt & Wolverton, 2009). Leadership programs can also offer the participants various leadership roles and opportunities that they may not have previously experienced in their educational careers (Fairfield, 2010).

Despite the documented successes, service-learning projects can be considered unsuccessful due to outside reasons. A program at a small liberal arts college in the Northeast experienced problems with their service learning programs due to the lack of program participants to attend all sessions for the specific program, presenters having to change their scheduled presentations due to the lack of people continually showing up to the programs, and the competition of similar opportunities offered during the same time period (Hannon, 2006). Another potential problem identified in the literature was that the student leaders only had a finite amount of time to implement their service projects (Heiselt & Wolverton, 2009). Working in teams to develop the project also can lead to some members to become uninvolved in the process of service-based learning (Fairfield, 2010).

Description of the Practice

The graduate students were assigned to implement an action research leadership project with a local community group as the culminating assignment in a Leadership Theory graduate level course. The instructor of the course provided guiding parameters for the project and assistance when needed, but the project was left open-ended to reflect the various intellectual interests of the graduate student researchers. One of the graduate students had a direct connection with the local chapter of the Rotary Organization. Rotary International is the world's first service organization, with more than 1.2 million members who volunteer locally, regionally, and internationally to combat hunger, improve health and sanitation, provide education and job training, promote peace, and eradicate polio under the motto Service Above Self ("Rotary International: About Us," 2010). The graduate students were able to contact their sister Rotaract organization for the possibility of implementing the leadership project with the collegiate organization. Rotaract is a collegiate organization that is affiliated with Rotary International designed for participants aged 18 – 30 (Rotary, 2009). After initiating contact with Rotaract, the graduate students met with Rotaract members to determine the needs of the organization. An assessment of the needs lead to the development of five workshops that coincided with the Rotaract Organization's weekly meeting schedule. The five workshops were based upon the Service Leadership Model developed by Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) and included five major

portions of their model including team building, awareness, empathy, persuasion, stewardship and commitment (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). The service model was chosen for this project based upon the mission statement of the Rotaract organization: *Service Above Self* ("Rotaract handbook," 2009).

Workshop #1

The first workshop focused on defining leadership. The three main questions to be answered during the first workshop were "What is a leader?" "Who are we as a group?" and "Why is it important to know who you are as a potential leader?" The think-pair-share method was used as a discussion tool during the first lesson. The think pair-share-model involves the instructor asking students to think about the question at hand, pair up with a nearby student to discuss the possible answer and then the instructor asks the groups to share their findings (Lyman, 1981). The effect of the think-pair-share lesson is the empowerment of the entire group to contribute to the outcome of the discussion. The workshop provided comfort for organizational members to develop the foundations of leadership training.

Workshop #2

Rotaract members completed the Big Five Personality Assessment prior to the second workshop. The key points of the assessment were reviewed and members were asked to reflect on methods to incorporate the strengths of each member to formulate an effective team. The Big Five Personality Assessment identifies leadership qualities that an effective leader innately possesses which include: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Barrick & Mount, 1991). The Big Five Personality Assessment emerged from leadership research over the last 25 years with research establishing that the possession of these five personality traits was correlated with effective leadership (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002; Northouse, 2007).

During the workshop, the leadership team shared the meaning of the five major measurements in the Big Five Personality Assessment Model. The team members were asked to share two major leadership strengths that they could add to the Rotaract organization. The sharing technique allowed for the group to see what kind of human, conceptual, and technical skills the group collectively possessed (Northouse, 2007). The second workshop encouraged Rotaract members to become aware of each member's strengths. By understanding their strengths, Rotaract club members began a path to better leadership (Rath & Conchie, 2008).

Workshop #3

Service leadership requires leaders to engage in effective communication (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). The goal of the third workshop was to teach effective communication techniques. The lesson focused on three areas: running a business meeting, developing a professional image, and promoting ideas. Parliamentary procedure is the process that businesses, organizations and governments worldwide use to maintain order while conducting business transactions (Robert & Robert, 2000). The goal was to introduce parliamentary procedure as an effective way to run Rotaract meetings. As a quick reference, a chart titled *Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance*

was given to each member (Morrison, 1994). Through interactive instruction, the entire Rotaract membership practiced the basic yet important tasks of introducing new business, discussing the new business and voting on the business in a meeting. *Robert's Rules of Order* was shared with the membership as an important reference for future business meetings.

Online professionalism is critical for individuals who will be entering the job market in the near future (Jannsen, 2009). The second portion of the workshop involved sharing with the members the importance of showing a positive image. The section began with an activity that involved members identifying the difference between appropriate and inappropriate photographs to post on the Internet. While some photographs were obviously either appropriate or inappropriate, several were inserted that could be considered either. The importance was for the members to realize if a photograph is questionable in appropriateness, then it probably should not be posted. Online posts can also affect someone's image; an example was shared with a Twitter post that cost a company millions of dollars of business (Shankman, 2009). The final portion of this section was a handout that the members could use to protect themselves through their individual Facebook accounts (O'Neill, 2009).

Leaders have to pitch their ideas; they have to learn how to effectively communicate the ideas to other people. Promoting ideas is accomplished through public speaking, resume etiquette, e-mail, letter writing and telephone. Members received a brief overview of effective speaking, examples of effective resumes, an explanation of the reasons why letter writing is still effective in the days of e-mail and a role-play exercise on effective phone conversations. Resources from the third portion of the workshop came from the resource book *Leadership Skills: Developing Volunteers for Organizational Success* along with some viable online sources (Lee, 2009; Morrison, 1994; Taber, 2009).

Workshop #4

Leaders must possess excellent time management skills to be effective stewards of the projects that they lead. The fourth workshop involved an introduction to two types of management, the management of time and the management of projects. The main goal of this session was to introduce the concepts of time and project management to Rotaract members through the initial planning of a car wash fundraiser. Before accomplishing this goal, Rotaract members were asked to assess their individual time management skills using an instrument from a respected business training website (MindTools, 2009). Project planning for the car wash fundraiser began after time management skills were measured. Five priorities for achieving the goals of the session included: listing goals, tasks and activities, setting priorities, managing interpretations, minimizing procrastination and setting/adhering to a schedule. Rotaract members planned the car wash fundraiser using the following order; parse, prioritize, plan, propagate, follow up and praise. The workshop ended with a review of the planning process.

Workshop #5

Commitment was the focus of the final workshop implemented with the Rotaract organization. Members were asked to recall the goals of the international organization and

create a plan to implement the knowledge gained throughout the workshop series with future Rotaract meetings and service projects.

This session involved using a six-step process focusing on vision, goal(s), resources, critical success factors, potential obstacles and chronologically arranged tasks. This process was aided through materials available from the Corporation of National and Community Service (EnCorps, 2006). The session was heavily oriented to the leadership approach of path-goal theory through the premise that the members of the student organization have certain goals and programs they would like to achieve and we as leadership consultants worked to help them navigate obstacles in order to achieve success (Northouse, 2007). The final workshop ended with the encouragement to implement the concepts learned through the workshops.

Results to Date

The five workshops were conducted during the 2009 fall semester during the weekly meetings of the collegiate Rotaract Chapter. Attendance was voluntary for the membership of the Rotaract Organization, but all members who were present during each of the meetings participated in the individual workshops.

A survey was created to assess the effectiveness of the workshops. The following results were reported.

Workshop participants were asked an open-ended question for the definition of a leader. Responses included:

“A leader is someone who can step up to the plate but also knows when to be more of a team player. They can take on different roles when needed. I think an important aspect of a leader is communication. They must be able to communicate and work with a variety of types of people and groups.”

“Someone who takes personal responsibility in order to attain the goals of a group.”

“A leader is not only someone who can lead others, but someone who can adapt to the needs of others and help to use their skills in order to make a group a more effective at completing a task.”

“Someone who is able to organize a group and accomplish a common goal.”

All respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had a better understanding of the mission of the Rotaract organization. In addition, they all agreed or strongly agreed that personality traits affect personal leadership styles. In response to the open-ended question, “How do your personality traits affect your leadership style?” participants said:

“I am not a very assertive person or confrontational. I think that this is shown because I lead in a different way and try to work more with others instead of appointing and directing the task.”

“I can use my strengths such as organization and relatable to others to make my leadership skills stronger.”

“Maybe overcoming my shyness would help me become a more effective leader.”

“I feel that leaders must be outgoing and accepting and including of all people and I feel that that has a lot to do with a person’s personality.”

Concerning the individual workshops, participants agreed that each of the individual workshops was either beneficial or strongly beneficial to them as a participant.

When asked to provide additional thoughts or comments from the research, the following comments were provided by the Rotaract members:

“Each individual seminar was very well planned and I feel as though the way in which the material was presented to our group was just right. You were relatable to college students and the length of each session was the perfect amount of time.”

“I thought that the workshop was very helpful and I would like to thank everyone who put in the time and effort to help our group grow.”

A final presentation was held at the local Rotary International organization explaining the workshop series with their sister Rotaract Organization. The workshop materials and lesson plans were presented in a notebook to the local chapter during this presentation so that they could be implemented with future members of the Rotaract Organization.

Recommendations / Implications

The Workshop Series Project was designed to apply the leadership theories graduate students were learning in class to real-life organizational leadership dynamics. The assignment also allowed students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of leadership training with individualized workshops tailored toward the interests and needs of the organization.

Replications of this project could be done by soliciting other existing organizations whose members could benefit from additional leadership training. The workshops have been developed and tested with a collegiate age group organization. Also, the workshops would be beneficial to other organizations as long as the content is tailored to the needs of the audience. The project utilized a service learning project to apply leadership theory and training. Other examples for service learning projects can be found at <http://www.servicelearning.org/> and <http://servenet.org>. Future studies should include a more thorough evaluation method. The survey for the Rotaract project provided valuable information, however specific questions could have provided more extensive data to improve the workshop series before offering the program to another future group. Because not every participant was at every workshop and not all participants filled out the survey, a true measurement of the opinions of each workshop are possibly not known to the researchers without further questioning of the participants. It is recommended that a future study conclude with a complete and in-depth qualitative case study to gather information on the benefits of the workshops and receive suggestions for improvement

from the participants. Another suggestion would be to increase the number of the workshop presentations. Two to three workshops could easily have been added using the same materials to allow for more in depth discussions of the leadership concepts.

Specific recommendations for the Rotaract group are based upon the observations of the graduate students. The graduate students recommend that the Rotaract group continue to promote leadership development by employing teamwork activities. A notebook containing all resources from the workshops was given to the President of Rotaract as well as their advisor. The notebook included the lesson plans from the workshops so the club can use it as a reference in the future. The graduate students believe that teamwork activities will strengthen the officer team and the members' desire to participate consistently throughout the academic year. Another recommendation offered to the Rotaract club is to form committees for larger projects to promote shared leadership among members. These committees could work closer with the local Rotary or Interact Organizations on activities. The Interact Organization is the Rotary Organization for secondary school members. These options should be explored in order to promote the connection between organizations as stated in the Rotaract handbook.

Conclusions

The workshop series followed similar outcomes outlined in previous literature. External factors of the participants, not the presenters had the effect of changing the order of the presentations (Hannon, 2006). The workshop series also emulated the positive effects of previous service projects including students enjoying the workshops while learning useful knowledge (Rosacker, et al., 2009). The participants in the program can also develop a strong empathy for the beneficiaries of the project (Fairfield, 2010). The graduate students developed an appreciation of the true impact of the Rotary International Organization.

The main benefit of the assignment was the direct leadership training for members of the local Rotaract organization. Rotaract members reflected the appreciation of this benefit through survey responses. Another benefit of the assignment is the hands-on leadership training experience provided to the graduate students. Applying leadership theory with another organization allowed for the greater retention of learning leadership theory by the students enrolled in the leadership theory class. This statement is supported by Dale's Cone of learning which states that learners retain the most knowledge if they teach the process to others (Lord, 2007). The learning by doing approach to leadership assisted the graduate students in developing a leadership training experience where they gained an appreciation for leadership by placing service above self.

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