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2. The Intended Outcomes and Impacts of Agricultural Leadership Development Programs
3. Research Paper
4. Agricultural leadership development programs have been in existence since the early 1960s. However, the long-term program impacts and outcomes have yet to be identified. This study identifies the intended outcomes of agricultural leadership programs as identified by program directors.
5. L. Rochelle Strickland grew up in Stephenville, Texas also known for its cowboys and dairy cattle. She graduated in 2006 with a B.S. degree in Agricultural Leadership and Development from Texas A&M University. Upon graduation she entered the graduate program in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication at UF. She completed her M.S. in 2008 and immediately began her Ph.D. program in agricultural leadership. She will complete her doctoral program in 2010. While at UF, Rochelle has worked closely with the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources. Rochelle has also assisted with numerous undergraduate courses and is currently the lead instructor for a university wide effective oral communications course. Her research interests focus on leadership programming specifically within the agricultural industry.

Dr. Hannah Carter grew up surrounded by the potato fields of Aroostook County, Maine. She graduated 1995 with a B.S. degree in Environmental Science from the University of Maine at Presque Isle. Upon graduation, she began her career with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension (UMCE) working within Maine's potato industry. In 1999, she graduated with her M.S. in agricultural education and communication from the University of Florida and in 2004 she earned her Ph.D. from UF in agricultural leadership. She currently is an assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication. Within this appointment, she is the Director of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources, a leadership

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6. Yes
7. Yes
8. No
9. Yes

The Intended Outcomes and Impacts of Agricultural Leadership Development Programs

Introduction

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation developed Agricultural-Based Leadership Programs in the 1960s “to increase the participant’s understanding of political, social and economic systems to develop social skills, to be effective spokespeople for their industry or community, to expand individual networks, and to develop future political, civic and organizational leaders” (Howell, Weir, & Cook, 1982). Following World War II, individuals at Michigan State University (MSU) identified a need for effective rural leadership (Miller, 1976). Dr. Arthur Mauch at MSU in agricultural economics, organized public policy workshops to deal with agricultural production, community affairs, and international development in the 1950s. Along this same time period, other variations of rural and community development programs were developed which eventually led to the development of the Kellogg Farmers Study Program (Lindquist & McCarty as cited by Mathews & Carter, 2008). Since then, there have been approximately 40 other programs developed in the United States, Canada and Australia based on the Kellogg Model.

Despite the fact that there are over 40 programs today, few in-depth evaluations have been conducted to determine the impacts of these programs. Therefore, program effectiveness becomes more difficult to determine when the outcomes of these programs are still unknown. Program evaluations have been conducted for many programs on various levels, most of which only measure short and medium-term outcomes (Abbington-Cooper, 2005; Black, 2006; Carter & Rudd, 2000; Dhanakumar, Rossing, & Campbell, 1996; Kelsey & Wall, 2003; Whent & Leising, 1992). Further evaluation is needed for the programs to better understand the outcomes, including short, medium and long term (Rohs & Langone, 1993).

Diem and Nikola (2005) recommend further evaluation of leadership programs to determine long-term impacts in regards to the agriculture and natural resources industries. Russon and Reinelt (2004) suggested that there is knowledge about how leadership programs affect individuals in terms of skills, capacities, and knowledge. However, there is little research to suggest the development of leadership over time (Russon & Reinelt, 2004). Additionally, an evaluation of agricultural-based leadership programs on a national scale has not been conducted in over 20 years, which was based on four of the original Kellogg Model programs in Pennsylvania, California, Michigan and Montana (Howell et al., 1982). Before understanding what the outcomes of the programs are, it is important to understand what the expected outcomes are as communicated by the leadership program directors. The purpose of this study was to describe the intended impacts and outcomes of agricultural leadership programs as perceived by program directors.

Literature Review

The Kellogg Farmers Study Program assumed that many Michigan farmers were well developed in technology and management, but lacked in social science and liberal arts knowledge and understanding (Miller, 1976). The advisors of the program felt that through a broad background in humanities, social sciences, and a better understanding of world economics and politics that the individuals would be more equipped to solve problems facing the rural areas. Along with this

concept, the program advisors believe that concentrated training experience would enhance and accelerate the leadership development process (Miller, 1976). The Kellogg Model of agricultural-based leadership programs was based on three main goals 1) “increase participation in public affairs activities on the part of young men and women from rural areas who show potential for leadership, 2) improve problem-solving and leadership skills of farmers and persons residing in rural areas and 3) expand extension programming at land grant universities in the areas of public affairs education and rural leadership development” (Howell et al., p. 5, 1982).

Since the development of the Kellogg Farmers Study Program, there have been approximately 40 other programs developed in the United States, Canada, and Australia based on the Kellogg Model. Today, there are 37 programs within the United States that are members of the International Association of Programs for Agricultural Leadership (IAPAL) along with three others outside of the United States (Lindquist, 2010). In 2000, Helstowski reported more than 7,200 alumni for all of the programs. Today, there are more than 9,800 alumni within the United States (Alcorn, et al., personal communication, March 2010). While each of these programs has unique characteristics, the core and fundamental structure of these programs are the same (Mathews & Carter, 2008).

The original Kellogg programs were developed to assist in changing or enhancing participants’ knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviors through participation in the programs. Miller (1976) conducted an evaluation to determine the extent to which the programs led to involvement in community roles, improved decision-making, and communication skills. More recent program evaluations have identified similar program outcomes such as increased networks, increased self-confidence, and further development and understanding of leadership responsibilities within communities (Dhanakumar, Rossing, & Campbell, 1996).

Carter (1999) conducted an evaluation of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources (WLIANR) and found that participants broadened their perspectives through exposure to different cultures, increased their networks, and further developed their critical thinking skills. Kelsey and Wall (2003) found similar results with the Oklahoma Agricultural Leadership Program such as an increased awareness of communities needs. Abbingtion-Cooper (2005) conducted a study of the graduates of the LSU AgCenter’s Agricultural Leadership Development Program and found they had increased their leadership skills and had a better understanding of U.S. agricultural systems and state issues. There are other similar results (Black, 2006; Horner, 1984), but few are able to measure the long-term outcomes and impacts of these agricultural leadership development programs even though more than \$111 million have been spent on these programs (Helstowski, 2000).

Agricultural leadership development programs “are held accountable for planned program outcomes and impacts, and the effectiveness and efficiency of their efforts or inputs in producing the intended outcomes (Boone, Safrit, & Jones, p. 231, 2002). An outcome is the “state of the target population or the social conditions that a program is expected to have changed” (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, p. 204, 2004). These outcomes may be short-term, medium-term, long-term or program impacts. Boone et al. (2002) identify knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations as short-term outcomes and behavioral changes as medium-term outcomes. Long-term outcomes may also be referred to as program impacts on the social, economic and environmental

surroundings (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004). Determining each type of outcome can be challenging for programs such as the agricultural leadership development programs, but necessary to continue to gain support from program sponsors.

Leadership program theory has been difficult to identify in a majority of the current literature on agricultural leadership development programs. Black and Earnest (2009) identified social learning theory by Bandura (1986) and adult learning theories of Birkenholz (1999), Caffarella (2002), and Knowles (1984) that can be applied to leadership development programs. Other theories and models that can be applied to agricultural-based leadership development programs include experiential learning (Roberts, 2006) and Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

Social learning theory suggests that people are perceived to learn best by observing others (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007) and upon reflection they will modify their own behavior (Birkenholz, 1999). Black and Earnest (2009) identified participants of leadership development programs that suggested “the ‘group’ influenced personal growth” (p. 185). Bandura (1986) states that through modeling, individuals can develop skills, attitudes, values, and emotions. Additionally, an individual’s self-efficacy increases as they learn through interactions with others and the environment (Bandura & Lefrancois cited in Merriam et al., 2007). Agricultural leadership development programs organize groups of individuals to create cohorts or classes in which this social learning or modeling can occur.

Adult learning theories identified by Merriam et al. (2007) all take a different approach to a similar end goal of behavior change. Knowles (1984) theorized that adults learn through experience and use a problem-solving approach to gain knowledge. Learners should feel able to utilize and apply the material outside of the educational setting (Merriam et al., 2007). Birkenholz (1999) believes that adult learning occurs because the learner is motivated to learn. The learner will select a learning experience because of an intrinsic desire for self-improvement and will continue to strive for that growth after reaching each level of Maslow’s Hierarchy (Birkenholz, 1999).

Roberts (2006) developed a model of the experiential learning process. The process begins with the initial focus and an initial experience. Once a learner has an experience, reflection on the learner’s observations should follow. The learner then makes generalizations, which are used to experience the phenomenon again (experimentation). This cycle continues to include four basic steps: initial experience, reflection, generalization, and experimentation. Agricultural leadership development programs provide a similar experiential learning process through guest speakers, hands-on training, travel, and reflection.

The Theory of Planned Behavior was used in this study, specifically focusing on identifying the salient beliefs of the directors. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, one’s behavior is a function of certain salient beliefs to that behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Behavior is guided by three kinds of salient beliefs: behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs and control beliefs. Behavioral beliefs are the beliefs about expected outcomes produced from a targeted behavior. Normative beliefs are the beliefs about normative expectations of important individuals or groups in regards to a targeted behavior. Control beliefs are the beliefs concerned with the potential factors that may facilitate or impede the performance of the targeted behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The behavioral

beliefs are assumed to produce a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the behavior. Normative beliefs result in subjective norm or perceived social pressure; and control beliefs determine perceived behavioral control. The three variables, attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, predict the behavioral intention of an individual (Ajzen, 1991).

Methodology

This study used a convenience sample of one focus group with 24 participants comprised of directors of agricultural and rural leadership development programs internationally with a wide range of experiences within the programs. Focus groups typically average in size between one and 20 participants (Creswell, 1998). These were the directors, which attended the International Association of Programs for Agricultural Leadership (IAPAL) annual conference. The directors were from programs throughout the U.S., Scotland, New Zealand, and Canada; most were directors of programs within the U.S. Experience with their respective programs ranged from six months to 35 years.

The moderator used a guide to question the participants about what the intended outcomes and impacts of the agricultural leadership programs are, what activities or experiences lead to specific outcomes, and when participants and alumni begin to demonstrate certain intended behaviors. Additionally, the questions sought to determine what types of leadership roles and responsibilities alumni were assuming and if alumni were seeking out additional leadership and educational opportunities up graduation.

The focus group was then transcribed and imported into Weft QDA software to be analyzed. The researcher then open coded the transcript for possible themes. In qualitative research, validation is determined through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorensen, 2006). Low-inference descriptors, such as direct quotes were selected to enhance the credibility of the study. To reduce bias in the procedures, the interview guide was reviewed by multiple sources.

Findings

Intended Outcomes and Impacts

Three major themes emerged from the directors concerning their beliefs on what the outcomes and impacts are of agricultural leadership programs: 1) improved social skills, 2) development of networks and 3) increased understanding and acceptance.

The participants reported many characteristics and examples of improved social skills such as increased communication skills both verbally and written, better negotiation skills, and “enhanced communication proficiencies.” Multiple participants identified alumni as becoming better communicators, better listeners, and better spokespeople for the industry. One participant shared the story of an alumni member, “As a result of the program, he makes better deals with the businesses, his negotiation skills are better, and he has totally different conversations with people than he had before.” These social skills also include media skills and media relations.

The participants also stated a creation and use of networks as an outcome of agricultural leadership programs. “We’re creating networks of leaders that can work together with each other and draw upon each other,” stated one participant. How program alumni are using these networks was also identified as participants stated there was “more collaboration among the different commodity groups in our state.” The improved social skills and networks also “enhances their confidence” which encourages alumni to take on more leadership roles within their businesses and organizations.

The participants continually identified understanding and acceptance of the issues and varying opinions as an outcome. This understanding and acceptance is in regards to agricultural and political issues as well as cultures, economics, and leadership. The participants provided examples of this understanding and acceptance as “being politically astute and understanding the importance of compromise” and as an “enhanced awareness of diversity issues.” Alumni develop a “more positive and proactive approach toward change” whereas in the past most individuals are resistant to change. This awareness also includes an awareness of the self and one’s strengths and weaknesses as well as an appreciation for others contributions to a family, business, or organization.

Other outcomes identified included increased confidence and more empowered leaders. “The impact that our program had on at least one of the individuals, prior to applying for the program, he stuttered, and he got the confidence and the coaching skills and overcame the disability that he had,” is an example shared by one participant in regards to developing confidence in program participants.

Activities and Experiences

The activities or experiences, which lead to these outcomes, were also identified by the program directors. These activities and experiences cover vary greatly but may include business and dinner etiquette, personality assessments, speaking assignments, media training sessions, wilderness experiences, and homework. One participant stated that “the act of application and participation in the selection process” also leads to the development and change of leadership program participants. Focus group participants also described experiences such as eating in foreign countries as an experience that “opens up a whole world” to leadership program participants.

These experiences such as eating foreign foods, speaking in front of a camera with a microphone, writing a bill for the state legislature were described as “multi-sensory bombardment” which allows the individuals to “hear it, taste it, touch it, smell it, teach it, and do it.” Finally, the activities and experiences were described by one participant by stating, “There’s a pattern that generally emerges in whatever we’re trying to teach of training, practice, feedback and reflection.” The participant continued by describing this pattern as a “cycle” used to improve and assist in the learning process.

Time

Participants were also asked when they believe the leadership program participants begin to effectively implement the various skills learned through the program. One participant summed the answer up as “from immediately to forever.” A specific example given by one director was, “The worst student I had in my 20-year career has become the best advocate as a management team member. But it didn’t happen until two years ago. So we have those who immediately went to work, applied, and we have those who later came up.” Another described the implementing of the skills as a puzzle with “aha” moments:

“You give them these pieces to a puzzle and some of them have the puzzle completed when they finish and some of them are still trying to find some of the pieces of the puzzle five, ten years down the road, but they still have those “aha” moments when that last puzzle piece fits...Everybody’s different. They’re individuals and you just never know when the light bulb’s going to click on and they can find that last piece of the puzzle.”

While there were many formal activities and experiences identified, there was also discussion of informal experiences described as “unplanned serendipity.” The participant explained this as an “unintended outcome” while another participant elaborated on this point by stating “about 15 percent of what they’ve learned is from each other.”

Organizations

Similar to program activities and experiences, there were also numerous types of organizations in which alumni have assumed leadership roles and responsibilities in after completing an agricultural leadership development program. These roles were at multiple levels beginning at the local level all the way up to the national level. A majority of these organizations were within the agriculture or governmental spectrums, while other organizations were charities, school boards, civic and volunteer organizations, or businesses. Examples of these leadership roles included mayors, school board members, state senators or legislators, volunteers of Big Brothers, Big Sisters, and executives in their businesses.

Along with this participation in organizations, one participant mentioned a decrease in the activity of alumni immediately following the program. “There’s a dip in activity where they caught up on some things and then they selectively chose what they wanted and so they became less involved in fewer organizations but more effectively involved in the ones that they were involved in.” Additionally, one participant described this concept of a leadership role as being an “engaged and responsive leader.” This notion of being engaged and responsive was considered to be more important than the actual position as stated here “the important thing is that they are much more engaged after the program.”

Lifelong Learning

Finally, the participants were asked what other types of education activities or programs alumni participate in after completing a leadership program. Participants reported formal education such as MBA programs or other higher education opportunities. Participants also reported additional leadership programs such as the International Leadership Alumni, Center for Creative

Leadership, [State] Political Leadership Program or other state, commodity, or community leadership programs. Further education may also include short courses or seminars.

The desire to learn more was described as an unintended outcome by one participant. Others agreed by stating, “They read more. Where some of them would not read anything but a technical or trade magazine, now they’re reading leadership books.” Another participant stated, “One thing in [State], I’ve noticed, is that the alumni are committed to life-long learning.”

Conclusions

The outcomes as identified by the participants are consistent with many of the outcomes identified in previous research (Abbington-Cooper, 2005; Black, 2006; Carter & Rudd, 2000; Dhanakumar, et al., 1996; Horner, 1984; Kelsey & Wall, 2003; Whent & Leising, 1992). Many of these outcomes are short and medium term outcomes rather than long-term outcomes and impacts. Improved social skills, development of networks and an increased understanding and acceptance were the primary outcomes identified or “salient beliefs” of the focus group participants that potentially lead to the intended behavioral changes of leadership program participants.

Many activities and experiences are conducted with the intentions of developing leaders for the agricultural industry. However, while most of these are formal and planned out activities and experiences, there are also many unplanned or informal experiences, which also assist in developing leadership such as the interactions between participants and applying and interviewing to participate in the program. “Leadership happens. It happens as much among them as it does from anybody we ever place in front of them,” stated on participant to express the nature of how these activities and experiences, both planned and unplanned, effect the program participants. The pattern identified by one participant is closely related to the experiential learning process: initial experience, reflection, generalization, and experimentation (Roberts, 2006).

“It’s a life-long journey, and I think so much of our product is that life-long journey.” This quote describes how long the directors believed it might take for program alumni to begin to demonstrate and effectively use the leadership skills and knowledge gained by participating in the program. Ultimately, it depends on the individual. The program directors discussed how each individual comes in at a different place as a leader, so the time it takes to become effective and apply the knowledge gained, will depend on that individual. Each individual will put together their “puzzle” and have their “aha moments” from immediately following the program to forever.

Alumni of agricultural-based leadership development programs are heavily involved in a wide array of organizations. The level of involvement ranges from the local to the national level. As one participant described it, “a vast majority of our alumni serve in local leadership roles or organizations, and lesser numbers serve in state level leadership roles, and lesser serve in national level leadership roles. But they’re present in all those levels.” Alumni are actively engaged and participating in organizations throughout their respective communities, counties, states, provinces, or countries. Many of these are identified formal roles, but others are serving in

less formal positions as volunteers. Directors do not have a preference as to what the leadership role, title or position is called, but prefer that alumni are only engaged and providing leadership to others. Related to both the time and leadership roles, one participant stated, "Several of my alumni say...they would have gone into those leadership roles but what the program did was it accelerated and shortened the time frames." Agricultural leadership development programs are providing this acceleration of more effective leaders in the industry.

Seeking out further and additional educational opportunities was identified as an outcome of participating in an agricultural leadership development program. Alumni read more, seek out higher education, and participate in other leadership programs at various levels. The program directors believe that by participating in this educational leadership program experience, program alumni increase their desire to learn and become life-long learners. Alumni of these agricultural leadership development programs have an intrinsic motivation to learn and grow (Birkenholz, 1999).

Recommendations/Implications

Understanding what the intended outcomes and impacts of agricultural leadership programs as perceived by the program directors will help to evaluate these outcomes through program alumni. Additional research with the directors of agricultural leadership programs should be conducted to identify more long-term outcomes and impacts. A majority of the outcomes identified were directly related to the alumni of the programs, which would be considered short and medium-term outcomes (Rossi et al., 2004). Further research should be conducted to better understand long-term outcomes. An evaluation of how alumni are using the skills, networks and knowledge gained is important to be able to communicate to outside sponsors of leadership programs to continue to gain funding and the resources needed for these leadership programs. More qualitative research should be conducted with the alumni members, as a majority of the research has been quantitative which has not been able to identify outcomes beyond short and medium-term outcomes.

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