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ABSTRACT
                This study compared the effectiveness of Georgia community
leadership programs based on leadership skill development to that of programs
based on issue discussion and networking. The Leadership Practices Inventory
(LPI-Self) was adapted for community leaders and mailed to a stratified
sample of 376 alumni of community leadership programs based on the two
approaches. Of the alumni, 188 were from rural areas and 188 were from urban
areas. The 189 surveys returned were analyzed. Means and standard deviations
were calculated for each of the subscales of the LPI-Self. Two-way analysis
of variance was used to compare the LPI-Self subscales of alumni from the
skill-based and issue- and networking-based programs. No statistically
significant differences emerged between the leadership practices of the
graduates of the two types of programs. Some small differences were found in
only four categories of the LPI-Self subscores. Both types of programs were
deemed effective in promoting the use of transformational leadership
practices, and both types of curricula were concluded to be suitable for all
individuals of all ages, educational levels, occupations, races, and
locations (urban and rural). It was recommended that more diversity be
created in community leadership classes. (MN)

Selected Georgia Community Leadership Programs and Their Effect on Selected Leadership Practices of Program Alumni

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Selected Georgia Community Leadership Programs and Their Effect on Selected Leadership Practices of Program Alumni

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to compare selected leadership practices of alumni of sustained community leadership programs that are based on leadership skill development curriculum and those based on issue discussion and networking. A review of literature focused on six of the theories of leadership featured in the Fanning Leadership Center *Community Leadership Program* and how they relate to the pillars [principles], practices, and tasks of leadership. A review of community leadership programs nationally, at the state level, and within Georgia revealed two types of community leadership programs: (a) one based on leadership skill development and (b) one based on issue discussion and network development. Demographic variables of age, education level, gender, rural and urban leadership concerns, volunteerism, and serving in appointed/elected office and their relationship to leadership were reviewed. Some studies have found differences in leadership in some of these demographic variables.

The study used a causal-comparative design. The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI-Self), adapted for community leaders, was used in this study. Demographic questions were also designed to collect necessary data from community leadership program alumni. The survey was mailed to an equal allocation, stratified sample of 376 community leadership program alumni of skill-based curriculum and issue-based and networking curriculum consisting of 188 rural alumni and 188 urban alumni. Data analysis was conducted on a total of 189 returned, usable surveys.

Means and standard deviations were calculated for each of the sub-scales of the LPI-Self. Least mean squares were calculated and Pearson Correlation Coefficients were applied. In comparing LPI-Self sub-scores of alumni from skill based curriculum and issue based and networking curriculum, two-way ANOVA of variance was used.

Results of the study indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between alumni who completed community leadership programs using skill-based curriculum and alumni who completed community leadership programs using issue-based and networking curriculum. Some small significant differences were found in only four categories of the LPI-Self sub-scores when comparing these scores to the two different types of curriculum.

Conclusions

Based upon the results presented in this study, the following conclusions have been formulated:

1. The results of the LPI-Self indicate that alumni of Georgia sustained community leadership programs are using transformational leadership practices regardless of the type of curriculum, skill-based or issue-based and networking, used in their leadership program. Therefore, it can be concluded that either curriculum is effective in promoting these leadership practices.

2. The factors of age, educational level, gender, occupation, race, program location (rural or urban), serving as a community volunteer, or serving as an appointed/elected official had no effect on the practices of alumni of sustained community leadership programs regardless of the type of curriculum used in their leadership program. Therefore, it can be concluded that either curriculum is practical for use by a variety of individuals in a community to increase the viability of leadership.

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3. Demographic data indicated that alumni of Georgia sustained community leadership programs regardless of the type of curriculum, skill-based or issue-based and networking, were committed to serving as community volunteers. Therefore, it can be concluded that alumni are demonstrating transformational leadership practices in their community via this volunteer service by displaying the more widely and deeply held values such as compassion and concern for the common good.

4. Based on the profile of appointed/elected officials of alumni of sustained community leadership programs, only a small percentage of alumni are serving in appointed/elected office regardless of the type of curriculum they experienced in their leadership program. Therefore, it can be concluded that a skill-based or issue-based and networking curriculum module on public leadership that would educate community leadership program participants about ways they can be effective in developing, implementing, and changing public policy should be developed.

5. Based on the profile of age, gender, education, ethnicity/race, and occupation of alumni of sustained community leadership programs regardless of the type of curricula diversity of program participants is lacking. Therefore, it can be concluded that efforts should be made to create more diversity in community leadership classes.

Discussion

The findings of this study supported other leadership research that indicated that both skill-based curriculum and issue-based and networking curriculum serves a valuable role in leadership development (Conger, 1992). According to O'Neil (1993), skills training is a necessary part of a leadership curriculum, but a leadership curriculum must also teach leaders to work collaboratively, to struggle with conflicts of values, to learn from mentors, to promote creativity, to learn from errors, and to think globally and cross-culturally. It should be noted that even though there were no significant differences based on LPI-Self scores between alumni of sustained community leadership programs using skill-based curriculum and those using issue-based and networking curriculum, this finding is not indicative that one of the curricula is necessarily better for training community leaders. Both types of curricula, when structured properly and planned accordingly, can provide opportunities for community leadership program participants to work collaboratively, struggle with conflicts of values, learn from mentors, promote creativity, learn from errors, and think globally and cross-culturally.

A skill-based curriculum such as the Fanning Leadership Center's *Community Leadership Program* that is developed, written, and field tested in community leadership programs can provide a ready made skill-based curriculum with structured and planned experiential activities that provide hands-on practice with collaboration, conflict resolution, appreciating diversity, and making decisions. Issue-based and networking curriculum often offers the same opportunities, however, these programs most often rely on numerous consultants/trainers/speakers from the corporate/business environment and often the issue discussions are driven by guest speakers who are experts on the subject with little opportunity for participants to wrestle with the conflicting values often present in issue-based discussion.

Since the majority of the issue-based and networking curricula programs are sponsored by chambers of commerce, these programs often focus on issues that the chamber of commerce supports; most often the reason for presenting the issue is to gather support for the chamber's position on the issue from members of the leadership program. Several leadership programs have completely separated from chambers of commerce and formed their own non-profit organization in order to have the freedom to choose issues to focus on in their leadership

programs while providing an atmosphere in which open discussion and conflict resolution may occur.

At the beginning of this study, it was thought that the alumni of community leadership programs that used skill-based curriculum, specifically the Fanning Leadership Center's (FLC) *Community Leadership Program*, would have higher LPI-Self scores than those alumni of programs using issue-based and networking curriculum. The fact that the FLC's revised *Community Leadership Program* curriculum has been widely available and in use only since 1994 contributed to the small number of community leadership programs that were using the curriculum. This curriculum was adapted and revised from The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service *Community Leadership: A County Focus* community leadership curriculum. *Community Leadership: A County Focus* was frequently used in more rural locations and often in communities where a chamber of commerce did not exist. On several occasions alumni of a community leadership program that had used *Community Leadership: A County Focus* would work together to establish a chamber of commerce in their community. In many instances, when this occurred, the Cooperative Extension Service and the chamber of commerce would join forces to co-sponsor the program. Grassroots leadership development with an emphasis on skill-based curriculum was one of the purposes of this curriculum.

Another influence on the skill-based curriculum not being as prevalent in chambers of commerce leadership programs is the establishment of the J. W. Fanning Community Leadership Development Center at The University of Georgia in 1982. Supported by a grant from Georgia Power Company, the Center specifically targeted chambers of commerce to establish leadership programs that were more focused on issue-based discussion and networking development for program participants. The Cooperative Extension Service's *Community Leadership: A County Focus* was not emphasized for use by chambers of commerce although the chamber of commerce leadership program directors and leadership program steering committees were encouraged to invite the Cooperative Extension Service to co-sponsor the leadership program. This did not always occur. In fact, in some locations two separate leadership programs emerged: one community leadership program using *Community Leadership: A County Focus* curriculum and sponsored by the Cooperative Extension Service and another leadership program sponsored by the local chamber of commerce with assistance from the J. W. Fanning Community Leadership Development Center. The reorganization and renaming of the J.W. Fanning Community Leadership Development Center to The Fanning Leadership Center in 1991 was a direct effort to consolidate and focus community leadership development under one organization, with the Fanning Leadership Center collaboratively working with all University service units and academic departments to deliver community leadership development resources to Georgia citizens via existing community leadership programs regardless of their sponsorship.

Since 1991, the Fanning Leadership Center has twice revised its *Community Leadership Program* curriculum and worked with chambers of commerce to use this skill-based curriculum to enhance the issue-based and networking curriculum that most use in their programs. As more chambers of commerce continue to use this curriculum, it is expected that *Community Leadership Program* skill-based curriculum will become more widely used in this market. This will help to increase the number of community leadership programs that use skill-based curriculum.

Most, but not all chambers of commerce, are located in urban areas. Therefore, it is more likely that networking within a leadership program will be an important feature of the curriculum. Often in urban locations, community members do not know each other at all. The opportunity to meet and get to know people is sorely lacking in urban settings as researched by

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Putnam (1995). Gardner (1995) stated that collaboration is sorely lacking in urban and suburban settings. By encouraging networking and issue discussion, leadership programs help to lay the groundwork for collaboration. After all, in order to collaborate, people must first know and understand who all the possible collaborators are in the community and the assets they bring to the table to help solve community problems. It should be pointed out that networking does occur in community leadership programs that use skill-based curriculum. However, it is a planned by-product of the community leadership program and not a main curriculum focus.

Other than the fact that chambers of commerce in Georgia were most often approached with an issue-based and networking curriculum, what other influences might be driving this focus? This study found that the majority of issue-based and networking curriculum community leadership programs, which are predominately chamber of commerce sponsored, have alumni that are well-educated (at least a four-year college degree and often a master's degree). Their occupations, as verified by this study, are most often attorneys, bankers, educators (administrators and teachers), and realtors. Through the process of obtaining their education and through continued education often provided and mandated by their profession, these individuals have most often been exposed to the leadership skill development topics of team building, collaboration, conflict resolution, diversity, and effective communication. Therefore, the chambers of commerce leadership program planners have chosen to not repeat topics in which these individuals have already received training. This type of skill-based training is often viewed as repetitive and unnecessary. However, reviewing and enhancing these skills through experiential learning activities is invaluable in providing leadership program participants with the opportunity to practice the necessary leadership skills with a group from their community. Knowing the skills and using them in a business/work environment can be different from knowing and using these same skills in a community environment where issues and problems are addressed and solved.

In this study, the race/ethnicity of respondents was mainly African American and Caucasian. Alumni were predominately male. Community leadership programs, whether using skill-based curriculum or issue-based and networking curriculum, need to work on increasing the diversity of participants in their programs. Diversity also includes age and occupation. Many communities address the age issue by adult alumni of community leadership programs establishing youth leadership programs. This does not provide an opportunity for senior citizens who are often retired and have time, skills, and knowledge to participate. However, for struggling with conflicting values, community leadership programs need participants that vary in age, race/ethnicity, and occupation.

Small business owners were noticeably absent from the sustained community leadership programs regardless of curriculum type. This lack of diversity may be attributed to the cost of the community leadership program. Those programs affiliated mainly with chambers of commerce most often charge $200 to $1,800 for individuals to participate in the leadership program. Employers most often pay this fee for the employees because employers reap business contacts and potential income from the networking that occurs. Individuals and small business owners most often cannot afford to pay the program fee. It is noted that most of these programs do offer scholarships for those who cannot afford the fee. However, the majority of participants pay their way via employer sponsorship and multiple scholarships are not awarded in these programs (Fanning Leadership Center Community Leadership Program Database, 1993).

In addition, these same programs often require alumni to nominate people to participate in future programs. Alumni most always will nominate co-workers whose fees will be paid by the employer, and they may not always have diversity in mind as they make their nominations. Community leadership programs using skill-based curriculum most often charge a lower

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participant fee, often less than $50 and seldom more than $100. This situation offers the opportunity for individuals to afford the fee and does not require the participation of the employer. These programs more often allow and encourage self-nomination in addition to alumni nominating participants for the program.

The Fanning Leadership Center will continue to make efforts to combine the best of both of these types of curricula and community leadership programs to better develop community leaders in Georgia. As stated earlier, both types of curricula can provide leadership development experiences that encourage and teach collaboration, conflict resolution, and appreciating diversity. Efforts need to be made to offer the best of both curricula in community leadership programs so that the curricula can blend to form one curriculum that provides leadership skill development, issue discussion, and networking opportunities.

According to this study, alumni of sustained community leadership programs regardless of curriculum type used in their program are actively involved in volunteering time in their communities. This is not a surprise. It verifies that the way to get something done is to ask a busy person to do it. The majority of survey respondents are employed full-time and still manage to volunteer time for community service.

The number of alumni who had served in appointed/elected office was 8.47%. Neither type of curriculum specifically addresses running for elected office nor being a political advocate. The FLC Community Leadership Program does contain a module on local government that focuses on how city councils and county commissions function and on the role of local government. Public leadership may be another topic for future modules in the Community Leadership Program. Within this topic of public leadership, political advocacy, issue framing and issue discussion, running for elective office could be covered for community leadership programs.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based upon the total experience of design, data analysis, discussion, and reflection of this study, the following recommendations for additional studies are presented.

1. Additional research needs to be done to better define and describe skill-based curricula. This study centered on Georgia community leadership programs that have used the Fanning Leadership Center Community Leadership Program (1995) core curriculum which consists of the following modules: Understanding Leadership, Understanding Values, Effective Communication, Group Dynamics, Group Problem Solving and Decision Making, and Building Communities Through Partnerships and Collaboration. The Fanning Leadership Center Community Leadership Program Database contains descriptions of community leadership programs that have been labeled by their directors as skill-based curriculum; however, they use a variety of consultants, instructors, and trainers to provide these skills. These session topics do not always match the Fanning Leadership Center's Community Leadership Program (1995) core curriculum, and therefore there is a need to determine exactly which topics community leadership program directors or boards of directors consider skill development curriculum and why. The Fanning Leadership Center chose its core curriculum based on research of an existing adult community leadership program skill development curriculum and based on what leadership development authors and researchers have recommended should be included in a skill development leadership curriculum. What do other states and countries define as "skill-based curriculum"? What methods have other

program directors used for determining which skill topics to use in their community leadership programs?

2. Research is needed to determine whether community leadership programs (not only in Georgia but in other states and countries) that use skill-based curricula, issue-based and networking curricula, or a combination of both have a different type of impact on participation of program alumni in their communities or in the implementation of community projects. Is the level of participation in community projects affected by the type of curriculum used in the leadership program? Does a particular type of curriculum or a combination of types of curricula work better to produce effective, committed, and involved community leaders?

3. Research is needed to determine the best ways to measure the impact of skill-based curriculum and issue-based and networking curriculum on participants in community leadership programs. Other than the LPI-Self, adapted for community leaders, what other types of instruments exist that could be used to assess the impact of a community leadership program on participants? Perhaps an instrument needs to be designed specifically for this purpose. This study indicates that age may influence having higher scores on the LPI-Self. Using an instrument that is age sensitive or developing one that is age sensitive may be more helpful in assessing the effect of curriculum type on program participants and alumni.

4. Several respondents stated on their surveys that they were not as active in their community as they would like to be. Additional research should be conducted to determine ways to maintain and increase the participation of community leadership program alumni in community projects. Often, alumni form alumni associations and/or youth community leadership programs. Alumni associations and youth programs often do not address identifying, developing, and implementing a community project that would improve their community. A continuation of the networking and relationship building is often the purpose of the alumni associations. What techniques, which skill development sessions, which community issues will best promote and encourage trained community leaders to stay actively involved in their communities? What strategies should be developed to keep trained community leaders engaged in active community participation?

5. The lack of diversity in occupations of participants, especially participation of small business owners, suggests the need for additional research in this area. Is the fee to participate in the community leadership program a barrier? Is the time commitment required to participate in one and often two weekend retreats along with eight or more monthly half-day or one-day sessions a barrier? In addition to small business owners, skilled/trade laborers were also absent from the mix of respondents. What specific actions could leadership program directors who want to have a more diverse mix of occupations in their programs take to make this occur?

6. Additional research should include the use of focus groups with the alumni of community leadership programs. The purpose of these focus groups should be to concentrate on gathering specific information and examples from alumni about ways they believe their community leadership program influenced their involvement in their community. Also, specific examples from alumni need to be documented that indicate from alumni's perceptions and experiences the ways their participation in the community leadership program affected their own leadership development. That is, in what ways do they think their leadership skills changed as a result of participating in the community

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leadership program and which topics in the program did they think were of most value to their own personal leadership development and to their involvement in their community?

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