

FOSTERING PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

Schools play a very significant role in fostering participation and leadership skills and in promoting the way forward to a better future. This article offers a number of strategies which can pave developmental pathways to student leadership. In addition, it analyses the beneficial aspects of such activities in enhancing the competency of students as leaders and effective participants.

INTRODUCTION

To envision a culture of greatness, a culture of continual development, it becomes imperative to understand the importance of shared leadership and a common vision. Schools provide the foundation for such a progressive future. Our youngsters are becoming more concerned about their future, and the concern centers on how to create successful and fulfilling adult lives while simultaneously ensuring that the world becomes a better place to live. Definitely, students' concerns as regards to their future are warranted. Collectively, they will be leading the society within a decade or two. It must be borne on them that there is exponential power in integrating their individual skills and that a sound working system can develop a unified strength spontaneously. With this gained knowledge and skill at hand, they will have the competence to enhance a more supportive society in which to build successful lives. Schools play a very significant role in fostering participation and leadership skills and in planning the way forward.

Strategies to enhance participation and leadership skills

Schools are working on a number of strategies to promote student participation and leadership qualities. While designing student leadership programs, the authorities must bear in mind that all students have the potential to develop leadership skills and that their programs should assist in the development and demonstration of these leadership skills. They should encourage equal participation of boys and girls. A few strategies that may enhance the collaborated effort in this direction are enlisted herewith. Schools may:

- ? provide a wide range of participation and leadership opportunities which cater for all students in school.
- ? maximize the range of students undertaking leadership roles.
- ? have formal leadership roles such as prefects, captains (house, school), school representative councils, etc.
- ? ensure that opportunities for student leadership are rotated amongst students.
- ? encourage student participation and leadership skills through such classroom practices such as co-operative learning and problem solving exercises.
- ? organise sports, academic competitions, project work, hobby clubs and cultural programs which are important means to get students involved in leadership.
- ? offer opportunities to work jointly to publish a school newsletter or a class 'web page'.
- ? engage students in decision making areas such as the range of curriculum, subject choices, vocational education courses, timetabling and length of periods etc.
- ? organize school public speaking and debating competitions. Let students prepare a three minute talk on a topic of common interest.
- ? establish an annual prize for student leadership achievement. Publicize the achievement through school newsletter, assembly announcement, merit certificate and school website.
- ? have a joint meeting, each semester, of student

representatives with the principal, school executives and parent bodies. This offers opportunities to review achievements and establish directions for future betterment.

- ? organise school fund-raising activities for specific purposes, for example flood relief.
- ? work in partnership with other Youth Clubs in leadership development programs.

Advantages of student participation and student leadership

"Engaging with young people and getting their views is one very important way of helping to rebuild the sense of connection between us, the school and the community in which we live" Young Person, World Youth Forum. Student leadership encompasses both formal and informal opportunities which enhance the competency of students as leaders and effective participants. Some of the positive aspects of student participation and student leadership can be outlined as follows:

- ? They offer opportunities to students to participate in decisions vital for their learning, their needs and

aspirations.

- ? They develop amongst students a sense of belonging to the school community.
- ? They develop skills for positive socially responsible participation.
- ? Critical and creative thinking skill programs prepare students to meet the challenges of leadership.
- ? They ensure that principles of equity and fairness are reflected in school practices.
- ? Moreover, they develop competencies which promote a healthy competitive relation with other schools in the area.

In conclusion, a number of strategies which can pave developmental pathways to student leadership can be formulated. Of course, each school will need to take decisions and layout plans for the enhancement of student leadership in ways that are most suitable to the needs of their student community. A school's leadership program will be more sustainable if it is supported by students, parents, teachers, the school executives and the local community.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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