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ABSTRACT

A study surveyed 110 randomly selected students from 16 randomly selected Future Homemakers of America/Home Economics Related Occupations (FHA/HERO) Chapters in high schools in a southern state to identify leadership training topics. Two instruments were used: Demographic Questionnaire and Leadership Training Topic Questionnaire (LTTQ). The LTTQ contained 22 items, identified through a literature review, for assessing student member perceptions regarding relevant topics that could be used for training student officers. Instrument design allowed students to check topics perceived important using a yes/no format for inclusion in leadership training. Analysis consisted of frequency and percentage distributions, principal component analysis, and analysis of variance. Results revealed a clear factor pattern of the leadership training topics, and 20 of the 22 training topics were perceived to be of sufficient importance for inclusion in leadership training designed for high school home economics students. Three recommendations were made: incorporate leadership training into all FHA/HERO chapter activities; continue leadership training, initially using the top 5 or 10 topics and incorporating others as needed; and develop leadership training packets. (Contains 15 references and 3 data tables.) (YLB)

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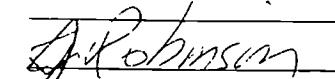
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Running head: IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP TRAINING TOPICS

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Abstract

The focus of this pilot study was to determine the factor component of a 22-item leadership questionnaire and to identify the importance of 22 leadership training topics. Data were collected from 110 Future Homemakers of America/Home Economics Related Occupations students. Analysis consisted of frequency and percentage distributions, principal component analysis and ANOVA. Results revealed a clear factor pattern of the leadership training topics, and 20 of the 22 training topics were perceived to be of sufficient importance for inclusion in leadership training designed for high school home economics students. Suggested recommendations were to continue leadership training, initially utilizing the top 5 or 10 topics, incorporating the other topics as needed.

Importance of Leadership Training Topics as Perceived

by Student Members of Future Homemakers of America

Just as Future Homemakers of America/Home Economics Related Occupations

(FHA/HERO) has been an integral component of the home economics curriculum, the development of leadership has been an integral part of FHA/HERO. Promoting " . . . personal growth and leadership development through home economics education" (Future Homemakers of America, 1990, p. 1) is central to the mission of FHA. Similarly, a sister organization, Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), has as one of its purposes the development of leadership ability in youth who may provide leadership in the future (Walters, Wilmoth, & Robinson, in press).

Gardner (1987) defined leadership as " . . . the process of persuasion or example by which an individual or leadership team induces a group to pursue an objective held by the leader or shared by the leader and followers" (p. 16). If this definition is embraced, then, the challenge for FHA/HERO advisors becomes one of providing systematic leadership skills training for individuals or leadership teams. The challenge for contemporary, secondary school advisors, is not so much one of creating conditions conducive to the rise of flourishing technological leaders as one of fostering leadership skills for organizational development. However, the identification of specific skills needed for the development of organizational leadership has been a problem for educators as well as administrators in business and industry.

One responsibility of high school FHA/HERO advisors is providing opportunities for their students to develop leadership skills, and recognize that a need exists for leadership development among high school students. Therefore, topics perceived as important by student FHA/HERO members for inclusion into leadership training were investigated.

Background

Researchers have attempted to define the concept of leadership throughout the years. Various definitions such as ". . . the contributions one makes toward the identification and attainment of group goals" (Bolton, 1989, p. 41); ". . . the ability to decide what is to be done and then get others to want to do it" (Larson, 1968, p. 21); and ". . . the ability and readiness to inspire, direct, and influence the actions of others" (Binkley & Byers, 1982, p. 81) are found in the literature.

Regardless of which definition is endorsed, the initial critical issue is identifying potential leaders and, secondly, providing appropriate training for these potential leaders. If "leaders are made, not born" (p. 614) as suggested by Benne (cited in Hohmann, Hawker, & Hohmann, 1982), the identification of potential high school student leaders who otherwise may be overlooked becomes a major concern (Brechtel, Wright, & Brechtel, 1982). Once potential high school leaders are identified, training may be used as a vehicle for promoting leadership abilities.

The answer to leadership skill development among potential high school student leaders, such as those involved in FHA/HERO, is to provide training that targets topics thought to enhance the goal of leadership development within youth organizations. According to

Erickson (1978) and Rotheram and Armstrong (1980), the time deemed appropriate for teaching leadership skills is during adolescence while enrolled in grades 7 through 12.

Inconsistencies are found in the literature in relation to topics which should be included in leadership development training. Urich and Batchelder (1979) identified eight skill topics for use in leadership training: problem solving, communication skills, decision making, action planning, parliamentary procedure, change strategy, team building, and conflict resolutions. In a similar study, Karnes and Chauvin (1986) classified training topics into nine categories: fundamentals of leadership, problem solving, written communication, verbal communication, decision-making, values clarification, group dynamics, planning, and self development.

Stiles (1986), in a leadership training program designed for high school females, used the following topics to promote a " . . . positive and productive attitude . . ." (p. 211) among these students. These topics were:

(a) communication awareness activities; (b) observation of leadership roles (Johnson & Johnson, 1982); (c) decision-making methods; (d) group building activities; (e) female leadership roles and prominent leaders; and (f) goal setting and evaluation. Bolton (1989) identified four components of leadership development: goal identification and attainment, communication skills, group process skills, and citizen participation skills. Two other topics reported to be significant to leadership training were enthusiasm and self-motivation (Seering, 1978).

Need for Study

Leadership qualities, which are not inherited characteristics, are a group of skills that can be taught, learned and practiced (Johnson & Johnson, 1982). Since leadership topics used by various organizations for training are inconsistent in the literature, there is a need to identify topics that should be addressed in high school leadership training programs. Once topics for leadership training are identified, programs can be provided to assist all FHA/HERO members in developing leadership skills. Thus, the basis for the present research was to identify importance of leadership training topics, as perceived by high school FHA/HERO members, which could provide a foundation for the development and implementation of leadership training programs.

Purpose of Study

The primary purpose of this endeavor was to conduct a pilot study to identify leadership topics of importance to high school FHA/HERO students for inclusion in high school leadership training programs. The secondary purpose was designed to determine selected demographic characteristics of FHA/HERO students and to ascertain the factor component of a 22-item leadership questionnaire.

Methodology

Sample

Subjects included in the pilot study were 110 randomly selected students from 16 randomly selected FHA/HERO Chapters in high schools in a southern state. All were members of local FHA/HERO chapters.

Instrumentation

Two instruments, designed by Walters, Wilmoth and Robinson (in press), were utilized in data collection. The instruments were a Demographic Questionnaire and a Leadership Training Topic Questionnaire (LTQ).

Demographic Questionnaire. The Demographic Questionnaire contained 12 items. Three of these independent variables were included as open-ended items (a) district, (b) school, and (c) overall grade-point average since grade 9. The variables included in the nine forced-field choice items were (a) gender, (b) age, (c) grade level, (d) number of years in home economics, (e) officer in FHA/HERO, (f) officer at local, state, or national level, (g) office held at local, state, or national level, (h) office(s) held in other student organizations, and (i) type of office held in other student organizations.

Leadership Training Topic Questionnaire (LTQ) . The LTQ contained 22 items, identified through a literature review, for assessing student member perceptions regarding relevant topics that could be utilized for training student officers. Instrument design allowed students to check topics perceived important using a yes/no format for inclusion in leadership training.

Content validity and reliability. In an earlier study, (Walters, Wilmoth, & Robinson, in press) content validity, including appropriateness and item clarity, was established through a panel of educators (four teachers, a teacher educator and a state specialist). The reported coefficient Alpha of the LTQ was .90.

Data Collection

To collect data for the pilot study, packets containing questionnaires, an instruction sheet, a cover letter, and a stamped, addressed envelope were distributed to advisors from 16 randomly selected FHA/HERO chapters. The advisors, in turn, administered the questionnaires to randomly selected FHA/HERO students in the respective chapters and returned completed questionnaires.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated for all items on both questionnaires. Principal component analysis and ANOVA were also performed. The coefficient alpha was conducted for the LTTQ.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Characteristics

Of the 110 students surveyed, 92.7% ($n=102$) were female with ages ranging between 13-19 years. Although grade levels from 9 through 12 were represented, 52.9% ($n=56$) were in the eleventh and twelfth grades. A grade point average of 2.50 (using a 4.0 scale) or higher was reported by 67.3% ($n=64$) of those responding. Most students (59.3% or $n=64$) had been enrolled in a home economics program for two or more years; however, 39.9% ($n=43$) were enrolled in home economics for the first year.

Offices Held

The distribution of FHA/HERO members holding the two top officer positions (President and Vice-president) was even, ($n=18$; 16.4%) as shown in Table 1. Almost equal

numbers of members held positions at the next three positions (Secretary, Treasurer, and Historian/Reporter). Those who held positions other than the five officer positions cited, coupled with those who did not hold officer positions in FHA/HERO represented over one-third ($n=41$ or 37.3%) of those participating in the study.

Insert Table 1 about here

Although 83.6% ($n=92$) of the respondents were local FHA/HERO officers, less than 2% ($n=2$) had served in similar capacities at the state level, and less than 1% ($n=1$) had served at the national level as a vice-president. However, 38.1% ($n=42$) reported having served as an officer in other student organizations.

LTTO Reliability and Endorsements

The 22 training topics for these subjects produced a coefficient Alpha of .85 (SPSS^x). The coefficient Alpha computed for the present study is consistent with that reported in an earlier study conducted by Walters, Wilmoth, and Robinson (in press) which had a reported reliability of .90.

Although there was a range of 59 points in the topic endorsements, every topic received some endorsement. The topic Goal and Purposes of Organization received the highest endorsement ($n=90$ or 81.8%) and the topic Official Dress received the lowest endorsement ($n=31$ or 28.2%) as shown in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

On the premise that at least one-half (50% or n=55) of the sample perceived the topics as necessary for leadership training, 20 of the 22 topics (Table 2) should be considered for inclusion in leadership skills development. It is thought that if students in youth organizations such as FHA/HERO understand such topics as the organizational colors, then they can, perhaps conceptualize and then implement their use in a more meaningful way.

The two topics receiving endorsements below 50% were Organization Colors and Official Dress. These low ratings might be attributed to emphasis already placed on these two topics by chapter advisors. Organizational Colors and Official Dress were perhaps more visible to students; emblems may have been displayed in classrooms, and those attending district and state meetings may have observed executive council members and others dressed in the official dress of FHA/HERO officers and leaders. Students, thereby, have developed an awareness and/or understanding of these two topics as opposed to the other 20 topics that may have received less attention in home economics classrooms and/or FHA/HERO meetings.

Principal Component Analysis

Principal component analysis, the statistical method of choice for determining the component structure for the 22-item LTTQ, was utilized to determine if an underlying pattern

of relationships existed. On the basis of the Eigenvalue Criterion, one component accounting for 93% of the observed variance in data was retained. Kaiser's overall measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) was .97.

Topics were sufficiently similar in representative vectors to be represented by one principal component. The loading of the topics is reported in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

ANOVA

The 22 training topics arranged themselves into a clear factor pattern accounting for 93% of their collective observed variance. In addition, it was reasonable to investigate this variance in terms of its covariation with other independent variables (as listed in the demographic instrumentation section) under the assumption of their relationship to the various training topics. An ANOVA was computed under sequential entry of the independent variables without detecting significant differences between subgroups indexed for any one of the independent variables or any of their two-way interactions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn:

1. The 110 student members of FHA/HERO varied in their responses to the 22 training topics items. Furthermore, the responses to the items varied systematically from variable to

variable as was evidenced by extraction of only one principal component accounting for 93% of the total observed variation. The independent variables, however, did not differentiate the variance in the principal component between groups defined a priori.

2. The finding of within topic variation indicates that subsets (or groups) of students differed from each other in their endorsements of topics. From this, it should be interpreted that some students perceived some topics to be more important for training than did other students. Even though the independent variables did not account for variation by groups, findings indicated that a relative variation existed.

3. The endorsement of at least one-half (50% or n=55) of 20 of the 22 leadership training topics included in the LTTQ suggested that these topics were of importance to the members and should be included in leadership development and training for high school home economics students.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are given:

1. Replicate the study to include more students both intrastate and interstate.
2. Leadership training should continue to be incorporated into all FHA/HERO chapter activities as well as other integral components of the home economics curriculum.
3. Although all 22 topics should be included in a comprehensive leadership training skills or development program, perhaps FHA/HERO advisors should consider utilizing the top 5 or 10 identified leadership training topics initially for training sessions. The remaining topics could be included as time permits and/or needs exist for chapter members as well as

current officers.

4. Leadership training packets could be developed for individual and/or group use.

Components of the packets should include objectives, learning activities, worksheets, handouts and other items as deemed appropriate.

5. With 92.7% of members being female in the 16 pilot chapters surveyed, efforts should be directed toward recruiting more male members to become involved in high school home economics education and in FHA/HERO leadership opportunities.

6. Additional studies should be conducted to (a) determine independent variables impacting on training perceptions, either in designs similar to those reported here (for validation of present findings) or different from them, (b) identify other leadership training topics that may be of importance for training of prospective officers, and (c) examine the self-efficacy of males in home economics classes with respect to holding leadership positions.

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Table 1

Frequency and Percentage Distributions of Officer PositionsHeld by FHA/HERO Members

Office Held	FHA/HERO		Other Organizations	
	n	%	n	%
President	18	16.4	9	8.2
Vice-President	18	16.4	4	3.6
Secretary	11	10.0	13	11.8
Treasurer	9	8.2	0	0.0
Historian/Reporter	13	11.8	3	2.7
Other	23	20.9	13	11.8
None	18	16.4	68	61.7

Table 2

Endorsement of Leadership Training Topics Ordered on Decreasing Frequency

Rank	Leadership Training Topics	n	%
1.	Goals and Purposes of Organization	90	81.8
2.	Officer's Duties and Assuming Leadership Role	88	80.3
3.	Creed, Motto, and Emblem	85	77.3
4.	Planning a Calendar of Events	83	75.5
5.	Cooperation	82	74.5
6.	Fund-raising	81	73.6
7.	Conducting Ceremonies	80	72.7
8.	History of Organization	78	70.9
9.	Public Relations	77	70.0
10.	Decision-making Techniques	76	69.1
11.	Planning and Conducting Community Activities	76	69.1
12.	Parliamentary Procedures	74	67.3
13.	Communication Techniques	74	67.3
14.	Planning and Assisting with Conferences	70	63.6
15.	Planning and Conducting Banquets	63	57.3
16.	Organizational Structure of Student Organization	62	54.4
17.	Motivational Techniques	60	54.5
18.	Chapter Finances	58	52.7
19.	Participation in Competitive Events	55	50.0
20.	Constitution and Bylaws	55	50.0

Table 2 continued

Rank	Leadership Training Topics	n	%
21.	Organization Colors	46	41.8
22.	Official Dress	31	28.2

Table 3

Summary of Statistical Characteristics of the Principal Component AnalysisOrdered on Magnitude of Pattern Coefficient

Rank	Item	MSA	Pattern Coef	Eigen-Value
1.	Officers' Duties and Assuming Leadership Roles	.97	.92	.38
2.	Goals and Purposes of Organization	.96	.92	.61
3.	Creed, Motto, and Emblem	.97	.91	.44
4.	Cooperation	.97	.90	.18
5.	Planning a Calendar of Events	.99	.90	.07
6.	Fund-raising	.97	.90	.12
7.	Conducting Ceremonies	.98	.89	.39
8.	Public Relations	.98	.89	.16
9.	Planning and Conducting Community Activities	.98	.88	.09
10.	Decision-making Techniques	.98	.88	.21
11.	Communication Techniques	.98	.88	.16
12.	History of Organization	.97	.87	.90
13.	Planning and Assisting with Conferences	.97	.86	.22
14.	Parliamentary Procedure	.98	.84	.25
15.	Organizational Structure of Student Organization	.97	.84	.89
16.	Motivational Techniques	.98	.83	.13
17.	Planning and Conducting Banquets	.96	.81	.10

MSA = Measure of Sampling Adequacy

Table 3 continued

Rank	Item	MSA	Pattern Coef	Eigen-Value
18.	Participation in Competitive Events	.97	.79	.21
19.	Chapter Finances	.97	.78	.30
20.	Constitution and Bylaws	.98	.76	.50
21.	Organization Colors	.95	.73	.27
22.	Official Dress	.96	.65	.47

MSA = Measure of Sampling Adequacy