

Leadership Development through FFA: Role of Members and Context of Chapter Activities

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Introduction/Need for Research

As a premier youth leadership organization, FFA has prepared future leaders through local, state and national activities. The FFA mission is: “The National FFA Organization is dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of young people by developing their potential for *premier leadership*, *personal growth* and *career success* through agricultural education” (National FFA, 2005). FFA involvement has been shown to impact the success of community leaders regardless of their occupation (Brannon, Holley, & Key, 1989). FFA members were more engaged in school/community activities and career preparations than either non-members or typical high school students (Balshweid & Talbert, 2000).

Lofquist (1989) described the interaction between youth and adults in youth leadership organizations and identified that members are viewed as objects, recipients, resources, and partners. Ayers’ (1987) identified four key developmental phases in which individuals engaged in a leadership curriculum should progress: self, interpersonal, groups, and community.

Conceptual or Theoretical Framework

The Theoretical Framework examines the role of members (Lofquist, 1989), identified as objects, recipients, resources, and partners, and the context of leadership activities (Ayers, 1987), identified as self, others, groups, and community. Lofquist’s (1989) role of members falls along a range from object to partner. A student treated as an object will be given a task or project to complete because it’s “good for him or her,” while a student treated as a partner will be an equal partner in planning and conducting a project. The conceptual framework for this study was merged by Peiter, Rennekamp, and Nall.

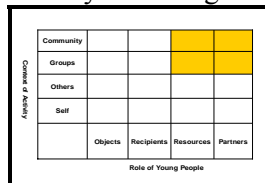


Figure 1. Conceptual Map for Theoretical Framework

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to describe leadership experiences of rural FFA members. Specific objectives of the study include: 1) Describe the role of FFA members; 2) Describe the context of FFA chapter activities; and 3) Plot the intersection of role and the context.

Rural FFA members were the population of this descriptive study. The research developed an instrument based on the theoretical framework. Sixty-four questions were developed which reflect the context of leadership activities and member role in those activities. Respondents measured their chapter based on a four point Likert scale. Content and face validity of the instrument was established using a panel of experts in the field of leadership development, NAAE Board of Directors, agricultural education pre-service teachers, and former FFA members. The instrument was pilot tested with FFA members in a

non-selected state. Chronbach's Alpha: Objects ($\alpha=.71$), Recipients ($\alpha=.85$). Resources ($\alpha=.88$), Partners ($\alpha=.86$), Self ($\alpha=.72$), Interpersonal ($\alpha=.88$), Groups ($\alpha=.88$), and Community ($\alpha=.88$). Using multi-stage cluster sampling, 48 FFA chapters were randomly selected with 1202 members in 36 chapters (75%) responding. Research data were analyzed using SPSS 10.0 and descriptive statistics of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were reported.

Results/Findings

Table 1

Context of FFA Leadership Activities

	M (n=1202)	SD (n=1202)
Self	3.01	.520
Interpersonal	2.92	.530
Groups	2.90	.528
Community	2.88	.599

Table 2

Role of FFA Members

	M (n=1202)	SD (n=1202)
Objects	2.87	.515
Recipients	2.88	.507
Resources	2.97	.534
Partners	2.99	.548

Context of Activity	Community	2.82	2.85	2.95	2.91
	Groups	2.97	2.84	3.01	2.99
	Others	2.93	2.80	2.90	3.01
	Self	2.94	3.03	3.03	3.07
	Objects	Recipients	Resources	Partners	
Role of Young People					

Figure 2. Intersection of Role and Context Matrix

Conclusions

As FFA members move through the continuum (objects, resources, recipients, and partners) agreement increases. FFA members view their role with adults as partners the greatest. In the context of FFA leadership activities, as FFA members moved through the continuum (self, interpersonal, groups, and community) agreement decreased. The greatest area was activities focusing on self-development in which members were treated as partners.

Implications/Recommendations/ Impact on Profession

FFA chapters must be encouraged to incorporate activities which focus on community based leadership such as civic engagement and community service. FFA chapters should continue to design activities that engage youth as objects, recipients, resources, and partners. Advisors should be exposed to this literature to be more effective. Further research must examine the FFA advisors' role in developing members' leadership skills through role and context.

References

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