

Chapter 12

Leadership Education at the Middle and High School Levels

Mark Patrick Ryan

Loyola Marymount University, USA

ABSTRACT

This study used extensive interviews, observations, a self-assessment of youth leadership skills, and collection of student academic, fitness, attendance and discipline data to analyze the impact of the California Cadet Corps on the youth in grades 4-12 that the program serves. Interviews with adult alumni of the program were also conducted. The data showed a remarkable long-term impact on promoting leadership development as well as skills and attitudes of citizenship, patriotism, basic military knowledge, personal wellness, and academic resiliency.

INTRODUCTION

For more than a decade, the researcher has studied the model of leadership development offered by the California Cadet Corps, a youth leadership development program offered in California schools for students in grades 4-12. Originally developed to train young men to be officers in the United States military, the program has expanded to serve both boys and girls and expanded its focus to include leadership development, fostering habits of good citizenship, promoting patriotism, encouraging academic excellence, teaching basic military knowledge, and developing lifelong habits of fitness and wellness. Quantitative and qualitative data from current and former student participants are presented in this study which had the following objectives:

1. Explain the California Cadet Corps (CACC) model for leadership development and achieving the program's six objectives;
2. Document the quantitative and qualitative data on the extent to which the CACC is achieving its stated objectives; and
3. Explore the implications of the CACC leadership development model for others involved in leadership and management education.

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REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There is very little research done explicitly on the efficacy of school-based youth leadership development programs such as the California Cadet Corps and Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps. There are a number of studies that look at the micro-level of impact of such programs on small numbers of students in specific domains, but nothing could be found in a search for literature regarding the efficacy and impact of leadership development efforts by such programs on the young people they serve.

Woyach (1996) acknowledged 12 principles for effective youth leadership programs, including the history, values, and beliefs of communities; knowledge and skills related to leadership; leadership styles; experiential learning and opportunities for genuine leadership; awareness, understanding and tolerance of other people, cultures and societies; and service to others in the community, country, and world. Ferber et al. (2002) Boyd (2001) found that experiential learning was a highly effective method for both teaching leadership skills and applying academic skills. Effective practical leadership experiences include simulations or case studies in which students must solve real world problems in as authentic a situation as possible, especially those which “feel” like the stresses of real world leadership (James, 1999; Lambrecht, Hopkins, Moss, & Finch, 1997).

The most effective youth leadership development models have a number of common characteristics, including adult role models who emulate effective leadership qualities; and situations in which youth are expected to act as leaders in “real world circumstances” with close adult supervision and monitoring. They also afford young people the chance to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes. Perhaps most importantly, these models give youth a sense that they really are in charge of a situation and are making decisions that impact the group in very real ways (James, 1999; Lambrecht et al., 1997).

Resilience in youth at risk is achieved, at least in large part, through the presence of at least one caring adult who models resiliency, is an effective listener, and teaches the young person how to deal with disappointment. Resilience was identified as a key component of successful leadership development in young people, as well as a desirable trait in adult leaders (Garmezy, 1993).

The capacity to adapt to the social, cultural, and ethnic diversity of young people is an essential characteristic of effective youth leadership development programs (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Such effective programs empower young people with the skills to effectively deal with the diverse world in which they are operating and will have to operate as adult leaders.

Osberg-Conner and Strobel found a significant disconnect between what students want to learn about leadership and what their adult instructors were teaching them (Osberg-Conner & Strobel, 2007). The same findings were confirmed by Eva and Sendjaya in their 2013 research (Eva & Sendjaya, 2013) who also found that leadership training rooted in ethics is both desired by youth participants and greatly needed by those participants to create leaders who exhibit positive values.

BACKGROUND

The California Cadet Corps (CACC) was founded by Brigadier General Edwin Alexander Forbes, then Adjutant General of the State of California military forces, and was signed into law on April 5, 1911 by Governor Hiram Johnson. Its original purpose was to train young men to be officers in the United States Army, and for several decades, the California Cadet Corps was the single biggest producer of commissioned officers in the United States Army. Upon graduation from high school (literally at the same time

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