

The Effect of Leadership Training for vocational high school students: Courses Based on David Hutchens's Learning Fable Series

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to explore the effect of leadership team activities for vocational high school students. 114 team members from five vocational high schools in middle Taiwan area take part in the leadership ability training camp. The teaching materials for the leadership training are based on David Hutchens's Learning Fable Series- The Lemming Dilemma, Shadows of the Neanderthal, Out learning the Wolves, and The Tip of the Iceberg (Chinese version, 2004). The courses adopt the methods of ice-breaking activity, competitive team activities, story-telling and questioning, story building up and enacting, and experience sharing. The data for analysis were separated into quantitative and qualitative parts. Quantitative part included immediate feedback questionnaire (99/114) scores about each activity and whole program, and follow-up feedback questionnaire (55/70) scores of 4 weeks later after activity about the group members' learning experience and personal growth in problem-solving skill and leadership. Qualitative part used the reflection of leading teachers and observing teachers, and self report of members' behavior changes in daily life.

In Taiwan, group activities for students are confined to the extracurricular activities. Unfortunately, the time for group activities is usually ignored and pressed under the tough entrance examination. Ho Futsai (2003) investigated Taiwan's high school plans and students' school life and found that only few peer group activities in schools are designed for adolescence to help them explore themselves through those

activities. Although helping students grow and learn leadership is pivotal, there are only two hours extracurricular activities per-two weeks for Taiwan' high school students to develop their ability. The trend today is to move away from working with a few gifted in an attempt to empower more students to realize their leadership potential and capability (Austin and Austin, 2000). For personal development and adaption into the society, schools should provide students with exposure to leadership practice and experience. Teachers can design courses, through peer learning activities, to increase opportunity to develop leadership. Group activities afford students the opportunity to learn in leadership roles and provide the environment to practice their leading skills. The main purpose of this study is to explore the effect of leadership training of group activities for vocational high school students.

The Development of Group Activities and Leadership

Adolescents are just situated in the important period of self-recognition and self-identity (Erickson, 1968). Sociability of connectivity with others is the basic desire of human beings. The interaction with peers is extremely helpful for adolescent's self-development. By adopting group activity mode and well designing courses and management, teachers can help adolescents transform those experiences gained from the activity into something useful to their future learning and lives.

The development of group activities could be divided into 5 stages (Hansen, Warner & Smith, 1980; Corey & Corey, 1987; Trotzer, 1999): beginning, transformation, cooperation and cohesiveness formation, working and producing, and ending stages. Every group stage has its task of leadership training development. An unsuccessful group cannot even be able to go through the complete 5 stages, falling short of students' expectations.

Rohnke (1989) noted that a successful adolescent team must have four factors, including trust, communication, cooperation, and attraction. At the beginning, it's not only important but also required to design funny and interesting activities. When a team could have a happy atmosphere at the very beginning, then the members will actively participate in the activities. The more efforts they give to the activity, the more benefits they will acquire. During the ending stage, the task of the leadership is to summarize leadership experiences and learning during the group training process, enhance confidence, and inspire to continually change and develop after the training.

Lin Qiaofang's (2002) indicated that all members should be allowed to share their experiences before the end of activities. The process of activities should include the chances for members to review and give feedback. Sharing experiences could be a way to pass on knowledge, experience, and interchange of heart and feeling. The sharing, debating and discussion could evoke thinking, introduce more thoughts,

retrospect and review personal experience to establish a new conviction and thinking systematically.

Riva, Wachtel and Lasky (2004) reviewed the relevant researches, noting that, from process of view, effective leadership contains 6 factors, which includes members sampling, preparation before activities, formation of positive relationship between the leaders and members, formation of group cohesiveness, effective communication and feedback. Leadership ability will be evaluated in the main functions which include motivation, attitude, communication and feedback, and interpersonal familiarity.

Cooperative Learning and the Benefit for Students

Many theorists maintain that the best and deepest learning occurs when students share ideas, test their understanding against that of others, and work together on meaningful projects. One of the teaching/learning techniques that we see emerging from this idea is cooperative learning. Cooperative learning can be defined as the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning (Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec, 1993).

Johnson & Johnson (1991) feel that in order for a lesson to be structured cooperatively, five essential elements must be present. It is these five elements, which distinguish cooperative learning from other traditional grouping styles. The first of these elements is the concept of positive interdependence. Positive interdependence is the perception that you are linked in some way to the others in your group. The second element necessary for a successful cooperative grouping strategy to work is face-to-face interaction. Interpersonal dynamics that only occur when student get involved in promoting each other are essential. The third element is individual accountability. It is important for members to know who may need more assistance, support and or encouragement. The fourth in this process is learning to function effectively together as a group, and develop social skills conducive to the learning process. The fifth is group processing. Students come back together at the end and discuss how well they achieved their goals and how effective their working relationships were. Research has shown that consistent use of cooperative teaching methods helps students to learn not only the subject at hand, but also empathy and tolerance (Dishon & O'Leary, 1984).

More recent years, the leadership emphasizes the aspects of leaders who collaborate with others to accomplish a common vision or purpose. Leadership needs opportunities to be created that will allow students to test their notions of leadership and gain valuable feedback. Woodward (1994) noted that it is necessary for students to be given the opportunity to develop skills in areas such as social activism, conflict resolution, collaborative learning, and constituency building, along with the more

traditional skills of decision making, judgment, and communication. Students must be provided with experiences for testing their leadership and gaining confidence.

The leading ability is an important item in group activities. According to Horowitz (2004), personal self image and interpersonal process are mutually, two-way influenced by each other. By learning interpersonal leadership in a group, members also revise their behavior by watching the mutual interaction between members and leaders, which forms the experiential learning cycle, where each person applies what he learns to the ordinary life.

Preissler & Hadley (1992) found that students holding leadership positions had more positive attitudes about careers and enhanced abilities to plan ahead for their careers. Cooper et al. (1994) concluded that leadership roles appeared to provide opportunities to sustain and enhance developmental skills. Ouellette's (1998) study of student leaders in various governance positions identified a variety of positive benefits. Involvement in leadership produced benefits in self-confidence, organizational skills, public speaking, hard work, interdependency on others, personal and professional objectives, and self-perception and trust. Felsheim (2001) also found that students became involved in student organizations to develop their leadership skills, help in focusing on career goals, and as a natural extension of increased and focused involvement.

Learning Organization and the Effects of Adolescent Team

A learning organization is a mental construct, a concept. Learning organization are concerned with the problem of what are the exact conditions needed to foster cooperation and how can learning organizations emerge and sustain. According to Fred Kofman & Peter Senge (1993), learning organization is "a new vision of organizations, capable of thriving in a world of interdependence and change." The Fifth Discipline, Peter Senge describes learning organizations as those organizations that actively participate and practice five disciplines: systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning. The cornerstone of the fifth discipline is systems thinking. It is important of leadership training for adolescents to think systematically. If adolescents involved themselves into the opportunity of leadership training activities, they can learn how to imitate and display the leadership behavior. The individual, who operates in a culture of systems, will understand that the group's success is directly related to his own success. If a group is growing and producing quality goods and services, then the members benefit from more learning opportunities, higher atmosphere climate, and better cooperative conditions.

Yalom (1995) asserted that group tended to the interpersonal therapy effect. Chen

and Rybak (2004) indicated that interpersonal interactions should include interpersonal feedback. By receiving feedback from other people, the member will improve his own access to the reality. By giving feedback to other people, the member could also experience the promotion of self-evaluation and self-esteem. James and others (1977) implied that the distribution of task and characteristics of the leader determines the organizational climate. The contribution that one gives to his team will be judged by how himself or other people to generate a good and bad feeling (Jans, 1982). On the other hand, as asserted by Jenson (1978), a person's chance to develop in a group is based on whether he/she has a right or chance to do so in a group. The right means whether a person is capable of influence other people by using resources in order to reach a common goal; the chance means that people influence others by being supported, appreciated and understood by companions. A formal or informal leading figure often rises up from such situations where group members learn and perform their leading skill. Moote & Wodarski (1997) noted that group activity experiences specially have more effects for those who uneasily communicate with the way of language.

Research Methodology

This study involved those students who took part in one day's leadership training camp from 4 vocational high schools in middle Taiwan area. The cooperative learning-styled group courses are based on the David Hutchens's Learning Fable Series- The Lemming Dilemma, Shadows of the Neanderthal, Out learning the Wolves, and The Tip of the Iceberg (Chinese version, 2004). The four fable books used as the main curricular framework for the training of leadership ability. Curricular framework design was according to the last year's exploratory group members' opinions. 16 among 143 exploratory group members were chosen to interview for revising curriculum. 114 of formal group members from 4 vocational high schools were randomly chosen into 5 groups. Five formal group leaders were the same leaders as the exploratory groups. Each formal group was plus one group observing teacher to record members' behaviors. The courses adopted the methods of ice-breaking activity, competitive team activities, story-telling and questioning, story building up and enacting, and experience sharing. For members' collaboration and leadership, students were asked to present scripts and think systematically of problem solution from various aspects.

The data for our analysis separated into quantitative and qualitative parts. Quantitative part included immediate feedback questionnaire (99/114) scores about each activity and whole program, and follow-up feedback questionnaire (55/70) scores of 4 weeks later after activity about the group members' learning experience and

personal growth in problem-solving skill and leadership. Qualitative part used the reflection of leading teachers and observing teachers, and self report of members' behavior changes in daily life.

Research results and Discussion

With regard to the quantitative part of immediate feedback of leadership training, some findings are found from table 1 and table 2. The first, the members liked Ice-breaking group activity most. For a successful group activity, it's not only crucial but also required to design funny and interesting activities at the beginning stage. When a team could have a happy atmosphere at the beginning, then the members would actively participate in the activities. The more efforts they gave to the activity, the more benefits they would acquire. The second, members felt impressive about the experiences that gained from the team. The members evaluated how they felt about the activity or the relation with team members by the way of generalized overall feeling. The cultivation of potential leadership is the learning target of group activity. The tendency of the leadership is the third order of the immediate feedback questionnaire, which is still the purpose that members take part in the team activity. From the table 1, we conclude three top orders that the influence of interpersonal interaction is usually stronger than the activity's learning target. The third of findings, members pay less attention to teacher's story-telling and questioning, distribution of acting roles and performance. It indicates that teachers play minor roles in the training activity. The task of acting role and performance is only some kind of state that gives the members have the opportunity to train their leading ability. It will not be the focus for students to care about which way the learning is presented. What teacher has to do is provide the opportunity to let students learn how to coordinate with others and learn the leadership skills.

Table 1. The Descriptive Statistics for Immediate Feedback Questionnaire of Leadership Training

	Order	Mean	SD.
Ice-breaking group activity	1	4.4987	.6141
The leader's story-telling	10	4.3795	.6729
Distribution of acting roles and performance	9	4.4170	.6104
Competitive team activity	7	4.5010	.5781
Experiences gained from the team	2	4.4975	.6222
The individual competence for the team activity	4	4.4823	.6788
The process of the activity	5	4.5118	.6125
The tendency of the leadership	3	4.4848	.5471
Personal commitments	6	4.5076	.6648
Administration service	8	4.4242	.5461

Table2 Leadership Training Immediately Feedback Questionnaire about Leading Ability

	order	order	Mean	SD
Ice-breaking group activity	1		4.4987	.6141
1. It helps me know everyone.		8	4.4242	.8093
2. It reduces my strange feeling and anxiety.		4	4.4848	.7741
3. It helps me be a part of the group.		2	4.5758	.6714
4. It creates warm atmosphere.		1	4.6364	.6461
5. It helps group cohesiveness.		3	4.5152	.7051
6. It makes everyone know each other better.		5	4.4646	.8368
7. I like the way the teacher leads us.		6	4.4545	.7596
8. I like the group activity curriculum.		7	4.4343	.8350
Experiences gained from the team	2		4.4975	.6222
1. the acquisition of the experience in supporting and assisting others during the activity		1	4.5859	.6702
2. the acquisition of how to use the materials of the team during the activity		2	4.4949	.7474
3. the acquisition of the skills in leadership during the activity		3	4.4141	.7286
4. the acquisition of easy participation and familiarity with others during the activity		2	4.4949	.7336
The aptitude of leadership	3		4.4848	.5471
1. I can finish the tasks from beginning to the end of the activity by myself after the understanding of the activity task of the team		1	4.4949	.7196
2. I know how to apply the knowledge and skills I knew or newly acquire to the process of the activity		4	4.5354	.6595
3. I can realize the tips of every role by playing different roles in the activity		2	4.4646	.7735
4. I can notice, experience and observe every influential factor of the successful activity		3	4.5758	.6561
5. I pay attention to the performances and feelings of my fellows and myself		1	4.4949	.7610
6. I would encourage my fellows and myself to make new attempts for the creation of another excellent experience		5	4.3434	.6572
The individual competence for the team activity	4		4.4823	.6788
1. the mental obstacle to the team activity is solved after the activity		2	4.4646	.7994
2. the confidence in joining the activity as an adventure is strengthened after the activity		1	4.4949	.7610
3. the strengths and weakness of my own are discovered after the activity		4	4.4141	.7826
4. the performance in the team is competent and pleasant after the		3	4.5556	.7723

activity			
The process of the activity	5	4.5118	.6125
1. the task required in the activity can be achieved by team members	5	4.4848	.7335
2. the communication goes well among team members	4	4.5051	.8002
3. the activity can be accomplished via the cooperation among team members	1	4.6364	.6301
4. there is a leading member among team members in the activity	6	4.4747	.7869
5. team members tend to accept the guidance of others	1	4.6364	.7348
6. the disobedience or the agreements to rules among team members appears in the activity	8	4.2020	1.2287
7. the time for self-reflection and feedback is sufficient for team members	7	4.4646	.7735
8. the process of the self-reflection and feedback is meaningful and substantial	3	4.5758	.7012
9. the overall performance of team members is satisfactory	2	4.6263	.6789
Personal commitments	6	4.5076	.6648
1. I will keep the purpose for the participation in this activity and the situation then in mind	1	4.5657	.7445
2. I learn how to exert my own skills and performance to the utmost while following the rules of the activity	4	4.4242	.8218
3. I learn how to express my opinions candidly and respect others at the same time	3	4.5051	.7474
4. I can accept the consequence of the activity without complaints and anticipate another goal of my efforts	2	4.5354	.7735

Table 3 showed the follow up questionnaire after 4 weeks of training activity. Based on Table3, generally speaking, those who took part in the activity have better understanding and confidence in themselves, better communication and cooperation with others, and more willingness to share experiences with others, all of which indicate the follow up effect of the activity more on the personal skills. It attests to the fact that students learn how to cooperate with others than how to lead others. The result is fitted to the cooperative leadership training purpose.

Table3. Follow up Questionnaire after 4 Weeks Later of Leadership Training

After group activities, I feel my personal growth parts is	Order	Mean	SD
I enhance more understanding myself.	1	4.33	.66
I can do well interpersonal interaction with others.	1	4.33	.72
I can earnestly involve myself into various activities.	2	4.32	.63
I have more confidence to myself.	3	4.25	.66
I can transfer the group experience to the daily life	4	4.23	.66
I can comfortably share my own experience and feeling.	5	4.19	.72
I can share group experience to my families and friends	6	4.11	.92

After group activities, I feel myself different from before is

Actively get custom with others	1	.86	.35
Learn to cooperate with others	2	.84	.37
Actively communicate with others	3	.75	.43
Actively make friends with others	4	.72	.45
Feel more joyful	5	.65	.48
Have more confidence to myself	6	.58	.50
Actively learn on own initiative	7	.56	.50
Appreciate and praise others	8	.49	.50
Won't feel afraid	9	.47	.50
More courage to challenge task	10	.46	.50
Trust others than before	10	.46	.50
Have acquisitions of the skills to lead others	12	.42	.50
More courage take risk	13	.37	.49
Have ability to problem solving	14	.33	.48
Enhance the sense of achievement	14	.32	.47
Think more careful	16	.28	.45
Imitate others how to lead	17	.18	.38

About the data of qualitative part, there are two parts including the reflection of leading teachers and observing teachers, and self report of members' behavior changes in daily life.

The Reflection of Leading Teachers and Observing Teachers

According to the observation of the leading teachers and observing teachers, they find members show enthusiastic and stressful in the process of the task in the stage of the story formation. At this stage, members are more interested in building relationships with others to make themselves feel at ease among groups. Members try to establish the network of social relationships, increase personal mutual familiarity, and enhance intimate relations and trust. In this period, one way of student leader selection was conducted through members' recommendations; another way was through the volunteer of certain members; whereas the third way was not obvious to show the specific leading person. Oftentimes, those who are active and hold definitive self-stance are visible in the team and would become the group star for the rest of the members in the preliminary stage.

During the period of distribution of acting roles and performance, the mismatch occurs between each group member's personality, value, and opinion upon the pressure of finishing a task. At this moment, members would pay attention to others' emotional reaction and expression, learn to accept others' opinions and create feedback for others, and establish the interpersonal cohesiveness. Harmony is very

important in group. Members link the positive perception of interdependence in some way to the others during the process. This belief strengthens the learning of all members, sharing their resources, providing mutual support, and celebrating their joint success. In an environment of true positive interdependence, mutual goals and joint rewards are established and become a natural outcome. The members have the opportunity to divide resources, give member a part of the total information required to complete assignment, and practice complementary roles.

The mission of leadership training is to learn how to self-evaluate, create mutual respect, enhance experience and hold responsibility, and share mutually. The cooperation among members is indispensable for the leading capacity is demonstrated through role playing in the activity. It is observed by teachers that members would notice others' responses and attain the consensus among the rest of the members while offering their own opinions, as described by one of the members, "what is regarded as the best in the discussion lies not in self opinion but in the way the opinions are shared." Under the requirement of role playing, in the process of the formation of the consensus, as some members raised suggestions in the team, the rest of the members would see the achievement of the task as the premise to take the distributed jobs or roles. The overall performance and the distribution of the tasks as the manifestation of the sense of solidarity among members rather than unique individual leading behaviors are deemed as important by members. One of the interviewed members indicates, "My original thought is that to activate or lead members would be achieved only by one person. Only one who is in charge of all of these. But it seems better to me that the leadership and interaction are done by every member." From the interview we find that no matter the members lead others or are led by others in group, students learn how to work together to achieve the common goals and train their leading abilities in group.

The Self Report of Members

About the self report of members' behavior changes in daily life after 4 weeks later of activity, students show much progress than before. For students' behavioral changes, they tend to have more confidence in themselves, more courage to interact with others and more willingness to face and solve problems after they took part in the activity. For instance, students reported that, "I have more courage to talk with strangers," "I feel less timid speak to the crowd," "I know the way how to cooperate with others more easily than before without the feeling of embarrassment," "Before the activity, I dare not ask for others about school homework, but now I can easily ask for others about many things," and "I am confident and courageous to express my own opinions."

In addition, from the points of the communication and negotiation with others,

students learn to share and respect their own opinions through cooperation. For example, students indicate that, “I learn how to persuade others to accept my opinions rather than compromise my opinions,” “I don’t worry about any difficulties and feel uncomfortable while cooperating with strangers,” “I learn to solve difficulties, respect and trust others,” “I gain courage, experiences and patience with waiting,” and “I learn how to inspire the morale of others.”

Moreover, in terms of the expansion of experiences, students are braver to take risks, enjoy taking part in new activities, and be willing to expand their experience. For example, students revealed some words as followings: “I gain a new experience in knowing many people and make friends with them. This is the first time I take part in team activity, and I would like to give a try next time.” “What shall I learn at present is to take any adventure bravely and I hope I can join the following activities.” and “I am inspired by the cooperation and stories in the activity, and I look forward to participating in the ensuing activities.”

Conclusion and Suggestion

The main purpose of this study is to explore the effect of leadership training of group activities for vocational high school students. We draw some conclusions as follows. The first part is about the benefits of group activities for students. The peer group activities have the definite effect of learning and imitating leading behaviors for the adolescents. Group activities can boost the self-concept of the adolescent, develop their interpersonal interaction, and develop individual abilities. Group activities also can encourage students to open mind to take some adventures and create superior life experience.

The second part is about the effects of leadership ability. Students increase courage to interact with strangers, willingly share and respect others’ opinions, and solve problems by themselves. Students also empower the ability to apply the leading experience to the daily life. Group activities provide the opportunity for students to practice systems thinking about the various opinions of problem solving and the way of overall thinking. Students also learn the methods of how to communicate and cooperate with other people.

The additional part is about the reflection of teacher. Teachers can correct leading style and promote leading skills in the process of the activities. Teachers also can deliver the tacit leading knowledge to the younger. Teachers can design courses and facilitate teaching materials to develop students’ leading abilities through the peer group activities.

The final part is about the successful factors for group activities. At group beginning stage, the ice-breaking activity has the effect of promoting the members to

know one another well. The ice-breaking activity is essential for successful team activities. The effect of ice-breaking activity here is to establish the network of social relationships, increase personal mutual familiarity, and enhance intimate relations and trust. Sharing one's own opinions and discussing the group's goal also important for successful factors for group activities because sharing and discussing can enhance emotional management and recognize others' unique personality.

It is feasible to make further research that team activities for training leading ability are available. Teachers can make best use of the students' manpower support to lead group activities and design various themes and activities for leading ability.

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Course training such skills should be graded. A student should master the fundamental aspects, such as: Communication skills. Decision-making skills. These skills are as important for the students' future as the knowledge they get in the classroom like persuasion, and cause effect essay writing and note-taking.

2. Team Building. One of the main goals of student leadership is team building. Of course, there are classes, groups, and friends. They all boost a student's ability to work as part of a team. However, student leadership gives people much more than that.

14 Evaluating courses and teaching Dai Hounsell. 198. Part 2 Teaching in the disciplines. He is particularly interested in the social uses and effects of new media and virtual worlds. He has been an author, broadcaster, critic, journalist, poet and educational developer. David Gosling has written widely on topics relating to learning and teaching in higher education and in applied philosophy. Formerly Head of Educational Development at the University of East London, he is now Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Plymouth. She is involved in the development of initial and in-service training for modern languages and publishes on a range of related topics. Sandra Griffiths was formerly a Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Ulster. An even shorter course may be based on the core units of only the first eleven modules.

Content The material in the modules includes information, tasks and study based on practice teaching and observation. The information sections can furnish either a basis for your own input sessions or reading for trainees.

2. Experiential work : tasks based on teaching/learning experience, which may be one or more of the following:

- a) Lesson observation: focussing on the point under study.
- b) Classroom teaching: where the teacher tries out different procedures with classes of foreign language learners.
- c) Micro-teaching: the teacher teaches small groups of learners or an individual learner for a short period in order.

The successful start of learning a foreign language helps to create a high motivation to learn foreign languages. The success of the training and the attitude of the students to the subject depends largely on how interesting and emotionally the teacher conducts the lessons. Of course, in the process of teaching foreign languages to pupils of primary school age, the game is of great importance. The more appropriate the teacher uses gaming techniques, visibility, the more interesting the lessons are, the stronger the material is absorbed. In terms of methodological continuity, it is desirable to ensure a smooth transition of children from one stage of education to another, avoiding the loss of formed skills and injuring children as little as possible. High schools, as well as separate vocational training centers, offer these types of courses and there are part-time courses for students as well. Community colleges, technical schools, and Career colleges also offer a wide range of VET courses to suit the varying requirements of different students and these types of courses give utmost importance to hands-on training because most of the students who attend these types of programs have their High school diplomas or GEDs. Students can find a wide range of internet-based vocational training programs as well. See also "How To Choose The Best Voca..."