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empowering youth
enriching communities
foróige

Leadership for Life



United Nations
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- UNESCO Chair in
Children, Youth and Civic Engagement
Ireland
- CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE

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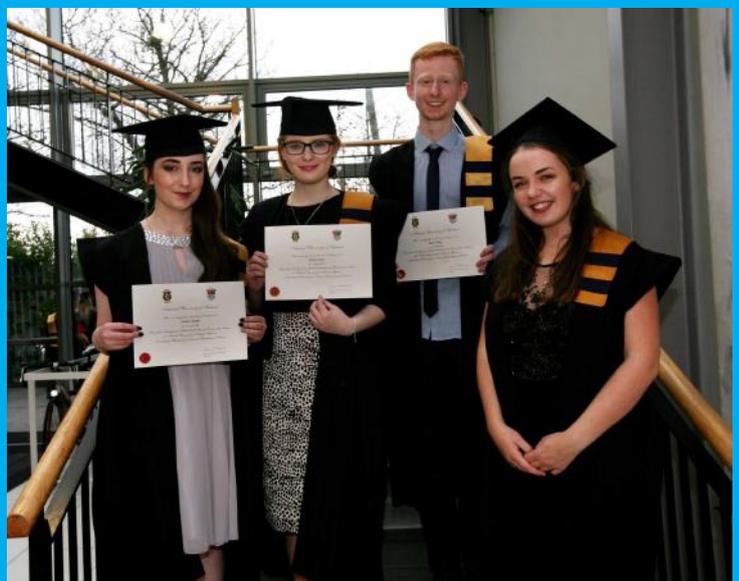
Foróige's Leadership for Life programme in association with the UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement

This exciting programme enables young people aged 15-18 to develop the skills and qualities necessary to be good leaders, as well as challenging them to use these skills for the betterment of society. The programme has been developed as a way of exploring young people's vision and passion, and to enable them to develop key skills such as planning, decision making, critical thinking, goal setting and problem solving that are core to effective leadership.

Leadership is defined as facilitating change and development of the individual and society through use of core social and emotional competencies, including self-awareness, collaboration, empathy and relationship building.

The programme is underpinned by theories and principles of youth work, leadership styles and adolescent development, as well as a literature review compiled specifically to inform the programme by the Child and Family Research centre at the National University of Ireland, Galway. The accompanying conceptual model brings together the development of skills, environmental factors and action orientated behaviour necessary for youth leadership development.

Leadership Programme graduates
attending the Graduation Ceremony in
NUI Galway 



Evaluation of the Leadership for Life Programme

The National University of Ireland, Galway overseen by Penn State University conducted research into the outcomes of the Leadership for Life Programme. This study involved a mixed-methodology approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative components in order to establish how much, and in what ways (if any) the programme has proven benefits. This research included a quasi-experimental component with young people receiving the Foróige Leadership for Life programme and a comparison group who did not. Under the quantitative strand of the research questionnaires were collected at three time points over an eighteen month period. The study focused on 259 young people who were involved in the leadership programme and a comparison group of 159 respondents. Standardised measures of Life skills, Leadership skills, Resilience, Social Support and Empathy were utilised. The qualitative strand of the research involved interviews at three time points with young people considered at high and low 'risk' of well-being issues as well as focus groups with programme facilitators.



What are the key findings?

Quantitative evidence

The key findings of this part of the research were as follows:

- The youth leadership programme is effective in increasing and sustaining leadership skills over time: The young people involved in the leadership programme demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in decision making, critical thinking, life skills, leadership skills and community involvement. Furthermore, these benefits were maintained and others accrued over time including empathy, communication skills and goal setting.
- Young people who completed the leadership programme and were part of the intervention group showed significant improvement when compared to the comparison group: These improvements included factors such as goal setting, empathy, critical thinking, communication skills, team work, problem solving, leadership skills and community involvement.



- Youth Leadership involvement increases resilience: Young people involved in the programme demonstrate significantly increased capacity to be resilient (overcome the odds) when compared to the comparison group.
- Youth Leadership improves social support: Participants demonstrated significantly improved perceived sibling support over time and enhanced emotional support when compared to the comparison group.
- Self-perception of leadership improves for high & low risk youth over time: Self-perception of leadership capacity significantly improved for both groups over time. Importantly, the high risk group who initially demonstrate very poor self belief improved in terms of perception of leadership ability over time to the extent that by the end of the study they were on a par with the low risk youth.
- Key factors in developing young leaders: The study identified a set of core factors key to developing young leaders. These factors include leadership mechanisms towards better resilience, adolescent well-being, empathy and understanding oneself.

In summary, the Leadership for Life Programme demonstrates improvements in Leadership skills, Life skills, Resilience and Social Supports among respondents.

Qualitative evidence

Interviews with the low and high 'risk' young people identified the following benefits resulting from involvement in the Foróige Leadership for Life programme:

- Both groups perceived that their supports had improved over the course of the programme with the high risk group identifying particular improvement.
- Young people reported improvement in leadership skills, communication skills, team work, conflict resolution, problem solving, social skills, sense of achievement and self-belief, empathy, self-awareness, self-control, confidence, public speaking, and assertiveness.
- Young people involved identified more opportunities to engage as leaders.

In addition facilitators reported similar positive results in terms of the perceived improvement of leadership skills among youth.



Conclusion

There is promising evidence that young participants in the Foróige Leadership for Life programme garner benefits from their involvement both personally and in their ability to contribute to their communities. The results demonstrate that involvement in the programme accrues potential benefits in terms of leadership skills, resilience and social support. Participants reported that they have gained improved skills including assertiveness, communication skills, confidence, social skills, problem solving ability, and leadership skills. The study indicates that the programme provides promising evidence that it is effective in enabling young people to be effective leaders.

Leadership Conceptual Model: Rationale

The opportunity to become leaders is something that presents young people with the potential to lead change, improve their community, develop creatively and harness the talents of their friends, as well as address many more issues of concern. To help young people in becoming great leaders certain conditions are important. Exposure to unique leadership ideas, experiences and situations helps them to develop as a person and as a leader.

This leadership model was developed after completing an extensive review of literature in relation to leadership, as a way of combining a number of important factors highlighted for a person to be an effective leader. The model brings together the development of skills, necessary environmental factors and action-oriented behaviour.

Skills considered important in leadership include: social and emotional self-efficacy, collaboration, articulation, insight and knowledge.

- **Social and emotional self-efficacy** involves self-awareness, self-control and the ability to relate to others (Goleman et al., 2002). This means spending time on personal development and awareness of interactions with others.
- **Collaboration** means that participants need time to work on team building, problem solving activities, conflict resolution and decision making, all of which are critical to leadership effectiveness (Kouzes & Posner, 1995).
- **Articulation** involves both oral and written communication, and focuses on developing a convincing argument, which encourages young people to speak their minds and win support for their ideas (Ricketts & Rudd, 2002).
- **Insight and knowledge** encourages young people to develop understanding of a particular area by investigating it, and also incorporates learning to think critically and ethically (Gardner, 1995).

Environmental conditions focus on providing young people with authentic opportunities to take on the roles and responsibilities of leadership, to take risks and set goals (Kahn et al., 2009).

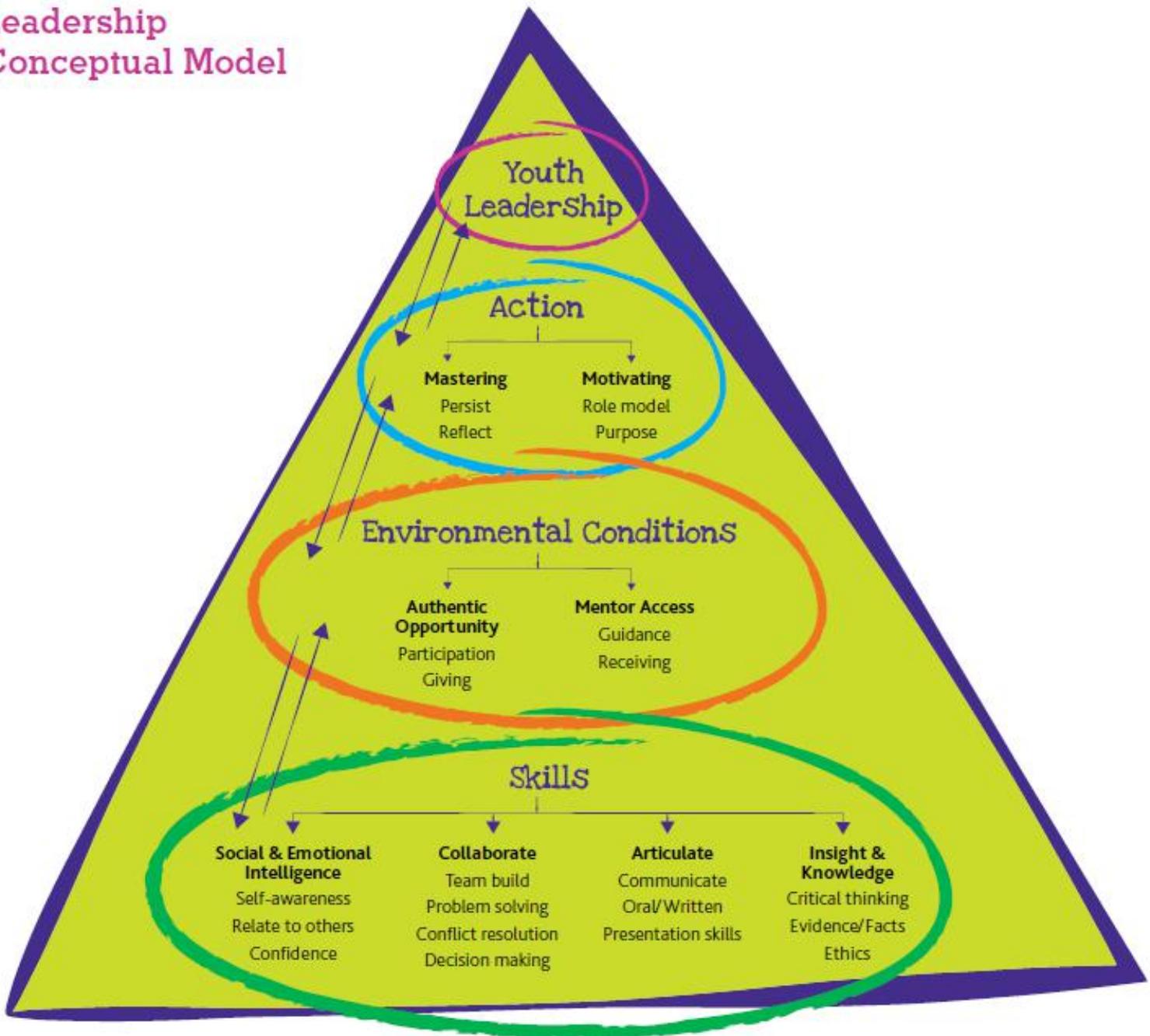
Action-oriented behaviour involves being able to inspire and motivate, and also master skills.

- The ability to **inspire and motivate** others is critical to effective leadership and involves being a role model, having high expectations of yourself and others, finding meaning and purpose in what you are working towards and having the belief and conviction that what you are doing is worth working for (Gardner 1990; Covey, 1991).
- **Mastery** involves persistence – the ability to stick at something, reflect on what is being done, learn from it and endeavour to succeed (Brendtro 2009; Gardner, 1995).

Social support is the belief that one is cared for, loved, esteemed, valued, and belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligations (Cobb, 1976). Social support is important for young leaders so they can access resources and seek assistance when necessary, enabling them to lead more effectively.

Resilience is the capacity to bounce-back when exposed to risk factors or stressors. It is the negotiation between individuals and their environment that maintains a self-definition as healthy (Ungar, 2004). Factors that influence one's ability to be resilient can be internal factors, family, peers and/or the environment.

Leadership Conceptual Model



(Redmond & Dolan, 2010)

Programme Aims

The Leadership for Life programme aims:

- To enable young people to develop the skills, inspiration, vision, confidence, and action plans to be effective leaders.
- To empower young people to make a positive difference to their society through the practice of effective leadership.

The programme will motivate and equip young people to:

- Identify their personal strengths and the motivations that inspire them to become leaders •
- Develop a clear vision of what they would like to achieve as a leader
- Develop a greater understanding of their style of leadership
- Explore the challenges and difficulties of leadership
- Develop clear communication skills
- Explore local, national and global issues
- Explain and apply methods of conflict resolution
- Practice problem solving and critical thinking skills as part of a group
- Set clear goals and develop action plans to achieve them
- Identify goals and vision for the future
- Organise and plan a project
- Understand and use the logic model for planning



"Leadership has honestly been one of the best things that I have ever done. Leadership has empowered me by allowing me to develop my skills, it has given me greater confidence in myself and has taught me about the importance of active citizenship. I have met so many wonderful people through Leadership and I am grateful for all of my experiences".

Jason Nolan, Former member FYI Foróige Club, Co. Louth

Programme Delivery



Module 1



- 15 one hour workshops
- 15 hours reflection/self-directed learning

Module 2



- 15 one hour workshops
- 15 hours reflection/self-directed learning

Module 3



- 20 hours community action project
- 10 hours group & individual reflection

Module 1

Module 1 introduces participants to the concepts of leadership and the core skills necessary to be a good leader. Participants devise a personal leadership goal and begin planning and working towards achieving this, alongside workshops focusing on communication skills, self awareness, values, and team problem solving.

Module 1 Units

- Introduction to Leadership for Life Programme
- Introduction to Leadership
- Understanding Leadership
- Team Building & Critical Thinking
- Communication Skills I & II
- Team Problem Solving
- Self-Awareness
- Values
- Community Needs Analysis
- Global Visions
- A Personal Vision
- Planning to Achieve Your Leadership Goal
- Presentations
- Reflection & Evaluation



2018 -celebrating 10 years of the Foróige Leadership for Life programme

Young people taking part in the Foróige Leadership for Life programme



Module 2

Module two builds on the learning from module one, with participants continuing to develop core leadership skills, while working on a team research project investigating local, community, or global issues. Module two introduces planning using the logic model, and advances communication and personal development skills in addition to exploring conflict resolution, critical thinking and debating.

Module 2 Units:

- Introduction
- Research Skills
- Planning Using Logic Models
- Leadership Styles
- Self Awareness & Values
- Team Research Project: Research Update
- Communication Skills
- Conflict Resolution
- Impromptu Debating
- Team Research Project:

Solutions and Recommendations

- Who Leads?
- Critical Thinking & Problem Solving
- Team Research Project:
Presentation Preparation
- Team Project Presentations
- Reflection & Evaluation



International delegates at the Leadership for Life Conference



Module 3

Module 3 enables participants to put into practice their learning from the previous modules by actively engaging in a community project of their choice, keeping a journal of their experiences, and presenting a portfolio on completion.

Module 3 is comprised of three elements:

- Community Action Project
- Ongoing Reflection
- Project Portfolio

Projects have included:

- Fundraising for, or volunteering with a charity
- Mentoring a younger person through a mentoring programme
- Making regular visits to a nursing home
- Fundraising and travelling to Africa to volunteer in youth and community projects
- Tidy towns projects and community clear ups
- Coaching local youth sports teams



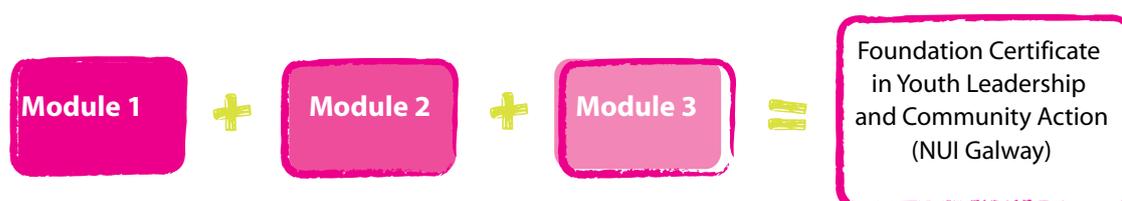
Mayo Foróige members graduate with a Foundation Certificate in Youth Leadership and Community Action.

'My leadership experience was the most valuable experience of my life so far. I have become more driven, focused and assertive as a result of all the skills I learned and people I've met along the way. There is just no possible way anybody would ever regret doing leadership'.

Lucy Kelly former member of Ratoath Foróige Club and graduate of the Leadership for Life Programme

Foundation Certificate in Youth Leadership and Community Action

In Ireland, Foróige's Leadership for Life programme has been accredited by the National University of Ireland, Galway, as a Foundation Certificate in Youth Leadership and Community Action. The programme was developed as a Lifelong Learning Initiative through partnership between Foróige and the UNESCO Centre for Children, Youth and Civic Engagement based at NUI Galway. It is accredited as a Foundation Course as 15 credits at NFQ Level 6.



For more information on The Leadership for Life programme please contact:

The Training Team @016301560

Leadership@foroige.ie

www.foroige.ie/our-work/youth-leadership