

The Taxonomy and Elements of Youth Development Programs

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Abstract: Youths are recognized as the future generations that contribute to the progressive growth and wellbeing of a nation. As such, attention needs to be given developing positive growth among youth. Considering that there have been a variety of programs for youth developments have been initiated and implemented worldwide, there is a need to develop a taxonomy of the youth development programs. Additionally, suggestions for organizing systematic and quality youth development programs are lacking. Therefore, this paper presents the taxonomy and principles of implementing youth development programs. Additionally, initiatives of youth development programs in the UAE are also discussed to highlight their strategies for youth development. This discussion serves as a contextual background for a research that aims to investigate the strategic management of youth development programs at UAE.

Keywords: principles, taxonomy, UAE, youth development programs

Introduction

Youths are the main determinant for a progressive growth of a nation as they are the future generations that shape the economic growth as well as the wellbeing of a nation. Considering youths as the assets of a nation, societies have been trying to solve youth problems such as academic failure, drug abuse, juvenile crime, lack of manpower readiness and more. Many youths have difficulties in schools, have poor mobility and decision-making skills, lack of sense of purpose, lack of skills or access to change. Even when problems are dealt with, youth are not automatically set up for university, work, and life. Further, recurrent studies around the world show that today's workforce lacks the skills needed to ensure successful work. Low rates of volunteering are signs that youth have no obligations towards society. As such, youths must be prepared to respond to the challenges and opportunities of mobility from adolescence to adulthood.

Nooteboom (2021) define youth care as the support of young people and their families who need support from a variety of services, and youth care professionals seek to promote coherent, continuous, and coordinated care in many areas of life with so-called integrated youth care. Empowering young people is important because they need the push to be able to take control of their own future. Moreover, empowering young people helps them better understand their roles and duties towards society. Youth development and empowerment provides opportunities for young people to be productive and contribute to their communities, to develop support networks, and to build knowledge and self-esteem. Empowerment also allows young people to

initiate different social and economic activities that have different positive impacts (Ukwayi et al., 2018).

Attention needs to be given for youth development as it is recognized as one of the most essential processes in the society. Government and different organizations have been initiating various measures with the aim to prepare and improve young generation. These organizations are mainly known to perform such duties to support young generations for meeting challenges and resolving them through appropriate solutions so that they are able to achieve success in many aspects. Marie (2017) claimed that youth development programs are being launched by agencies in the vicinity to encourage young people for grooming themselves so that society can be facilitated through their immense contributions that are primarily acknowledged in terms of their unique talents, skills, capabilities, and potentials.

Various parties globally, namely the government and non-government organizations including private organizations and communities have taken the initiatives to implement youth development programs with various emphases. Such programs are the most important part of any country, in which young people are given opportunity to gain experience that influences them in areas of social, ethical, emotional, physical, and cognitive capabilities. Apart from this, a healthy youth development program is considered with respect to engaging young people in every area that is mainly conducted either at educational institutes or in communities. A survey conducted on 2,653 young people from youth service centers in Hong Kong with the aim of measuring youth empowerment in the community indicated that there are positive correlations between youth empowerment in the community and those centers that provide various services and programs for youth (To et al., 2021).

This paper serves as a contextual background for a research that investigates the strategic management of youth development programs initiated by the United Arab Emirates. Specifically, this paper presents the different types of youth development programs together with its different emphases. Next, the youth development programs initiated in the UAE is described followed by the elements for organizing quality youth development programs.

A Taxonomy of Youth Positive Development Programs

Varieties of youth development programs have been reported worldwide with different purposes for different target groups. According to Roth & Brooks-Gunn (2016), young people have become the focus in most of the developed and developing countries because of their strong contributions in influencing the society at large. It is explored in the research that when adults are given more attention rather than youth, there is a possibility of lower development of a country due to which economies tend to suffer from bigger challenges that are least expected at the initial level. Moreover, when adults are given more importance rather than the youths for global development, economies tend to acquire fewer positive results, which have a direct impact on their survival and development.

Although there have been diverse and extensive youth programs organized by the government as well as relevant bodies, studies that investigate the quality of youth development programs are very limited. Ramey, Krasnor, Freeman and Lanctot (2018) noted the need for a typology or taxonomy as a means to gather and organize program information in a systematic way. In

relation to this, a simplified taxonomy of youth development programs is presented in Fig.1 below. The taxonomy of youth development program can be classified into five main categories, which are programs that focus on i) health, empowerment and responsibility; 2) skills and talent development, 3) leadership development, 4) entrepreneurship and 5) career and vocational development.

Youth programs to specific group of risk and marginalized youths (Rovito & Giles, 2018) tend to focus on building self-efficacy, self-determination, improving mental health and self-esteem (Hampfrey & McDowell, 2013). Additionally, there are also programs that focus on community engagement that will equip youth with the necessary skills to participate harmoniously in a community. For example, Aisha & Haley (2019) asserted that youth development programs are the key tools in promoting community engagement, which is a core feature of positive development.

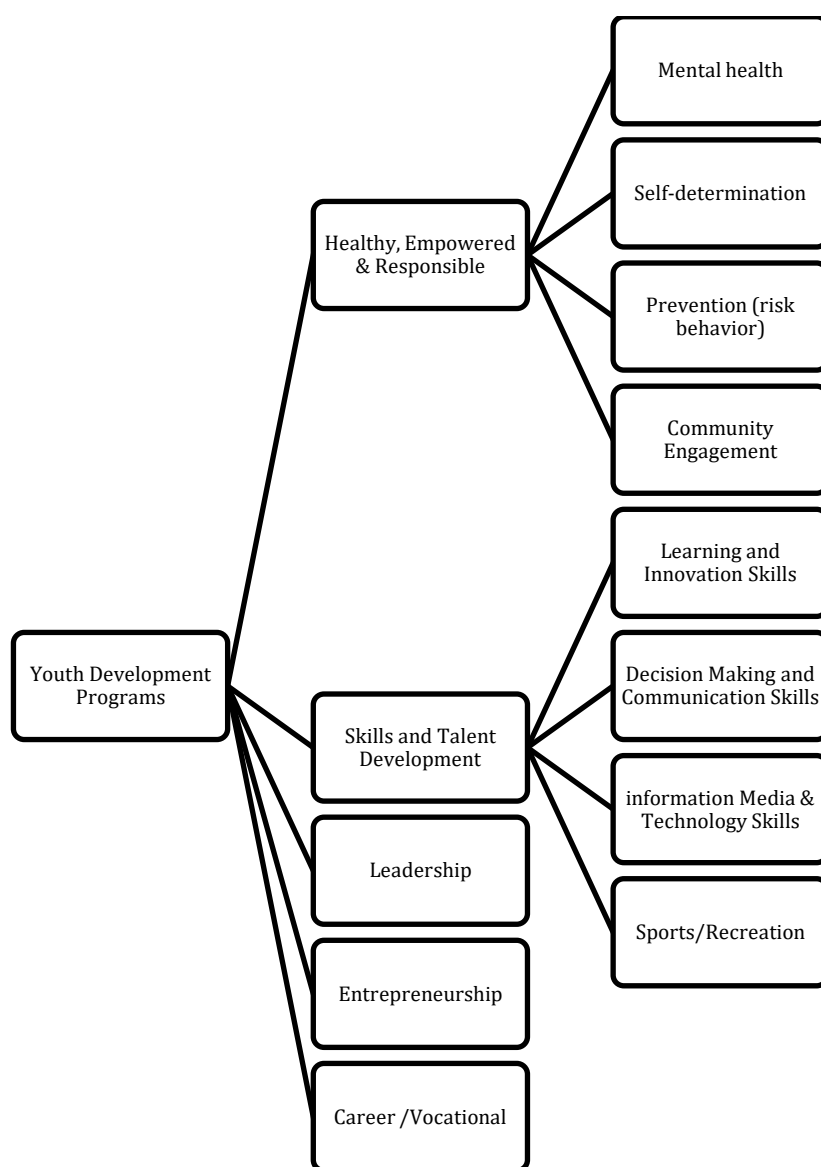


Figure 1: Taxonomy of Youth Development program

A greater emphasis has been laid on youth development programs, which is important for bringing a vital change in the countries so that their state could be improved at global level. Corliss and Forneris (2016) highlighted that it is important for government to play an effective role in bringing more opportunities for young generation where they can excel their talents and promote their society across the world. In this way, young people are also given the chance to showcase their hidden skills and competencies that contribute to increasing the worth of any region. The most prominent example is the sport of Golf, which is mostly initiated in the countries so that young people can participate and enrich their skills to become a suitable and most prominent player in country. In this way, young people are given the opportunity to enter in the game zone where they are made capable to adapt changes and perform likewise (Mihalic & Delbert, 2015). It helps them boost their energy levels and increases their confidence at large.

Another important reason for youth development program discussed by Shepherd et al. (2016) is the encouragement of young people to gain effective communication skills as well by interacting with numerous professionals. Through such processes, young people are motivated to adopt experienced principles helpful in shaping their personality while improving their interpersonal skills that facilitate them to perform many activities in social circumstances. In addition, Brenda (2017) concluded that participation in youth development programs enable the youths to interact with other individuals and thus, they learn to respect, pay attention, experience new challenges, respond to unfavorable situations, and even manage a number of different activities through various options and practices.

There are youth development programs aiming at preparing youths with leadership skills. Lin, Chan, Kwong & Au (2018) investigated the effectiveness of a program to improve youth leadership skills by having youth evaluate which leaders were most effective at building trust. Youth development programs provide youth development with the skills knowledge and positive atmosphere to combat deeply with personal issues and social norms of the society (Mayo, 2015), such as Asian-American youth is facing several issues of differences and is struggling with this difficulty due to the values and norms created by American Society. Moreover, due to the cultural and social difference, they are suffering from severe health breakdown such as a feeling of anxiety (Mayo, 2015; Mohammadi, 2020).

The significance of small business enterprise in contributing to the economic growth of a nation has resulted in many to recognize the need to develop entrepreneurs (S. Al-Shami, Mamun, Sidek, & Rashid, 2020; S. S. A. Al-Shami, Muhamad, Majid, & Rashid, 2019). program for sustainable economic development (Dadush, 2018). In some Gulf countries, youth face employment problems, for example, Youth Unemployment in Oman (49% of total labor force ages 15-24) (Ogamba, 2018). It is therefore important to prepare and implement youth programs to develop the different skills that youth need in different jobs, which make the managers of the various institutions work to accept these youths.

A theoretical perspective for youth development is the positive youth development (Chen, Wilum & Dimitrova, 2018) that focuses on five Cs model, which are competence, confidence, character, connection and caring. This framework tends to focus on developing youths with positive skills, attitudes and behaviors.

The following presents a snapshot of youth development programs in the UAE. There are number of evidences indicated in different researches that portray efforts of the UAE's government in bringing vital opportunities for young people. According to Tamimount (2019), as the UAE is mainly known for innovations and developed arenas, it has also focused youth in a number of ways. There have been many scholarships launched for young people so that they could be facilitated in their academics while provide them experience to learn in highly supervised and effective educational system. Main scholarships are offered in the areas of medical and health sciences, engineering sciences, environmental science, and energy fields. The main purpose of initiating such actions for youth is to polish their learning capabilities and provide them effective resources through which their intelligence and cognitive abilities are greatly influenced.

Apart from scholarships, there have been other areas, in which government has played its role to support youth in terms of their development. Based on the study proposed Hussain & Garavan (2016), the author states that the UAE's government has also funded in youth-based businesses in which young people are being invested to launch their businesses in different areas or domains that would help them in increasing economic stability of the country while also improves their potentials to bring a vital change in the society. For this purpose, it is viewed that government has supported some of the vital functions including Khalifa Fund, Mohammad Bin Rashid Award for Young Business Leaders, Dubai SME, and Young Entrepreneurs Competition. According to Anupama & Archana (2016), the interventions are also viewed in the area of career programs as well in which young people participate to improve their competencies that are significant in empowering their competitive talents. Some of these programs are highlighted as Teacher Assistant Program (Kayani), Creative Lab for Youth, Kafa'at Program, and some other programs.

As youths have been targeted due to the fact of developing the state, there are some other important aspects as well which are covered in the programs that are founded to influence young generation at large. Youth Ambassador Program is another important initiative for youths in the UAE, which is developed to encourage young people for progressing in their future career with high standards. Moreover, the platform is widely promoted to private sector, international community, and many other stakeholders so that they can embrace efforts of youth in different ways (Mathias, 2017). The program specifically provides some of the challenging responsibilities to the youth so that they can build their confidence and combat arising problems effectively.

Elements of Youth Positive Development Programs

Researchers have been interested in youth development and some of them (Borden et al., 2014; Arnold et al., 2021) have suggested ways of how to develop and empower youth. Borden et al. (2014) identified several areas for improving the positive youth development approach as they discussed (a) increasing professional development (b) developing better evaluation processes for programs to assess their quality and outcomes, and (c) addressing lack of standardized implementation of programs. Arnold et al. (2021) suggested that youth development should pay increased attention through advances in program design and evaluation and focus on programs as a context for youth development.

In establishing strategy of youth development programs and implementing them at higher level, it is important to understand some of the key principles that are the bases of effective programs established in the country. Fig.2 presents the principles or elements to be considered when implementing youth development programs. These principles were drawn from the literature review of youth development programs. According to Witt & Caldwell (2018), these principles illustrate leadership outcomes that contribute in building base of young people so that they can perform strategically in the upcoming situations.

One of the elements highlighted in the study is that program must be developed to help youth in learning and acquiring primary knowledge and skills with respect to leadership. Through this way, they would be capable to understand the measures taken in leadership and would apply in major professional area. Another principle illustrated in Corliss & Forneris (2016) is that youth development programs must include historical knowledge through which they become capable to perceive values and beliefs of their own society. In addition, the program must also include facilities related to engaging young people in touch scenarios so that individual strengths could be polished. Another important principle stressed in such youth development programs is related to ethics, values, and ethical reasoning. Moreover, it must align to particular practices, in which awareness is being promoted while tolerating other opinions, cultures, and societies must be integral as well.

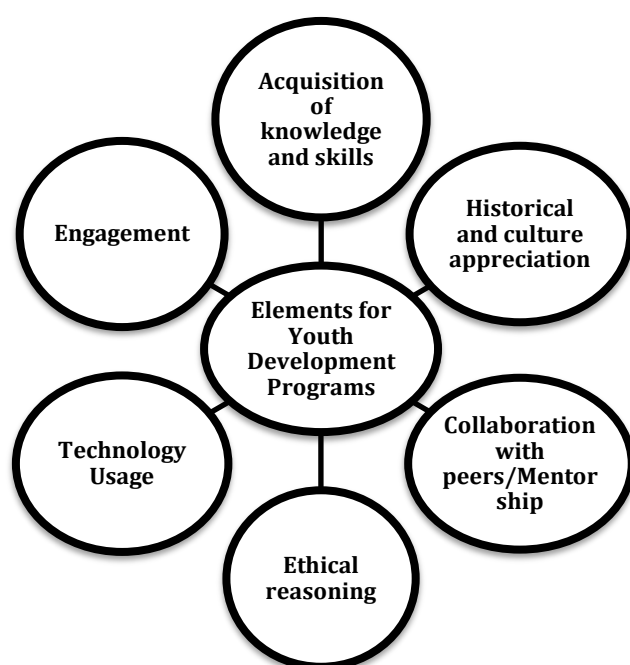


Fig 2: Elements of Implementing Youth Development Programs

Networking and collaborating with peers in certain situations are also vital in the youth development program, which is considered before initiating the program at higher level. In this way, expectations of youth will also be discussed and similar ways to equip such areas will be given attention so that young people would be involved in social cooperation to the greatest extent. Another important principle is engagement, in which youths' engagement and active participation in the activities of the youth development contribute to the effectiveness of the

program. Development at this level is considered important so that they would be able to communicate with each other and accomplish social goals effectively.

Finally, the use of technology in the youth development program is considered appropriate considering youths are the digital natives. Highlighting the widespread advances in technology and communication, booming economic developments and increased competition, Trilling & Fadel (2009) expressed their concern to prepare youths in meeting the challenges of the new century. In this regard, he introduced the skills need for the youths to survive and thrive in this complex and connected world. They categorized the skills into three main categories, which are learning and innovation skills, information media and technology skills, and life and career skills. They suggested those skills need to be infused to the youths during their education years.

Conclusions

The paper presents taxonomy of youth development programs initiated by different entities worldwide, highlighting on the categories and sub-categories of youth development programs. Additionally, important elements for developing quality youth development programs are also presented. This paper emphasizes the importance of youth development programs, which are mainly established in the countries where talents and skills of young people would be promoted at higher level. By doing so, youths would become competent enough to intervene in developmental areas where their role is integral for providing support and resources to the country. It is recommended that programs must also initiate measures through which their professional and most competitive skills are improved, specifically in the innovative areas.

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