

THE TAXONOMY AND PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT: *Youths are recognized as the future generations that contribute to the progressive growth and well being of a nation. As such, attentions need to given to youth development to ensure its positive growth and programs for youth development need to be implemented adequately and effectively. Considering that there have been variety of programs for youth developments have been initiated and implemented worldwide, there is a need to develop taxonomy of the youth development programs. Additionally, principles 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.*

Index Terms: principles, taxonomy, UAE, youth development programs

I. 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. Domestic violence, workplace conflicts, and divorce rates are signs that we have not taught youth how to properly manage relationships. As such, youths must be prepared to respond to the challenges and opportunities of mobility from adolescence and prepare for adulthood.

Attention needs to be given to youth development as it is recognized as one of the most essential processes in society, in which agencies and different organizations initiate certain measures with the aim to prepare and improve the young generation. These organizations are mainly known to perform such duties in order to support young generations for meeting challenges and resolving them through appropriate solutions so that they are able to achieve success in many aspects. A study proposed by [1] 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.

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 principles or elements for organizing quality youth development programs.

II. TYPES OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Varieties of youth development programs have been reported worldwide with different purposes for different target groups. According to [2], young people have become the focus in most developed and developing countries because of their strong contributions in influencing 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. Researchers [3] 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 programs 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.

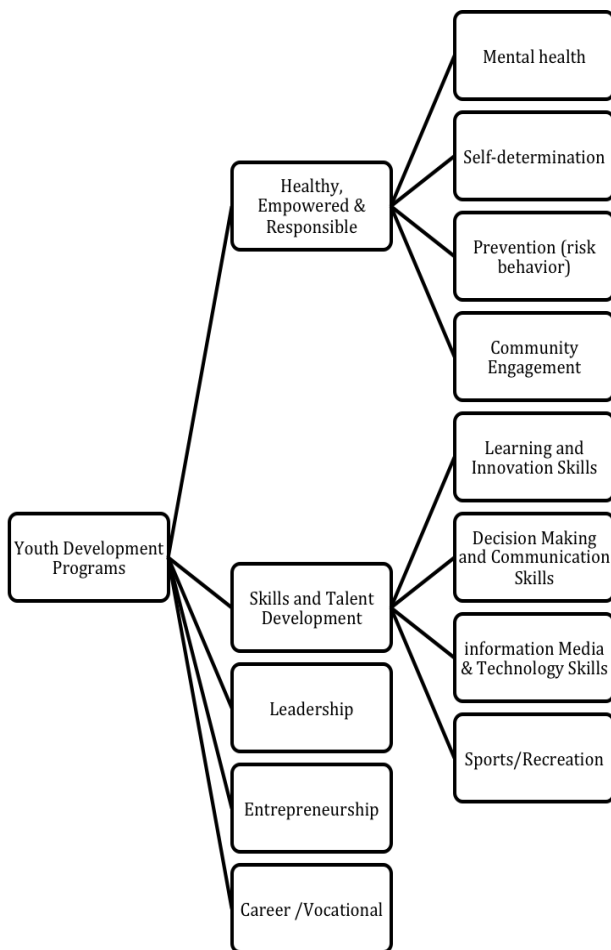


Fig.1: Taxonomy of Youth Development Programs

Youth programs for a specific group of risk and marginalized youths [4] tend to focus on building self-efficacy, and self-determination, improving mental health and self-esteem [5]. 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, [6] asserted that youth development programs are the key tools in promoting community engagement, which is a core feature of positive development.

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 the global level. [7] highlighted that it is important for the government to play an effective role in bringing more opportunities for the young generation where they can excel in 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 the game zone where they are made capable to adapt changes and performing likewise [8]. It helps them boost their energy levels and increases their confidence at large.

Another important reason for the youth development program discussed by [9] 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, the study of [10] 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. A study by [11] 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 personal issues and social norms of society [12], 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 cultural and social differences, they are suffering from severe health breakdowns such as a feeling of anxiety [12].

The significance of small business enterprises in contributing to the economic growth of a nation has resulted in many recognizing the need to develop youth entrepreneurs. There have been an increasing number of youth programs that focus on promoting economic empowerment programs for sustainable economic development [13]

In some Gulf countries, youth face employment problems, for example, Youth Unemployment in Oman (49% of the total labor force ages 15-24) [14]. 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 positive youth development [15] which focuses on the five Cs model, which is competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring. This framework tends to focus on developing youths with positive skills, attitudes, and behaviors.

III. YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN THE UAE

This section presents a snapshot of youth development programs in the UAE. There is a number of evidence indicated in different research that portrays efforts of the UAE's government in bringing vital opportunities for young people. According to [16], as the UAE is mainly known for innovations and developed arenas, it has also focused on 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 providing them with

experience to learn in a 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 with effective resources through which their intelligence and cognitive abilities are greatly influenced.

Apart from scholarships, there have been other areas, in which the government has played its role to support youth in terms of their development. Based on the study proposed by [17], 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 the government has supported some of the vital functions including the Khalifa Fund, the Mohammad Bin Rashid Award for Young Business Leaders, the Dubai SME, and the Young Entrepreneurs Competition. According to [18], 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 the 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 that are covered in the programs that are founded to influence the 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 careers with high standards. Moreover, the platform is widely promoted to the private sector, the international community, and many other stakeholders so that they can embrace the efforts of youth in different ways [19]. The program specifically provides some of the challenging responsibilities to the youth so that they can build their confidence and combat arising problems effectively.

IV. THE PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

In establishing a strategy for youth development programs and implementing them at a 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 [20], these principles illustrate leadership outcomes that contribute to building a base of young people so that they can perform strategically in upcoming situations. One of the principles highlighted in the study is that programs must be developed to help youth in learning and acquire primary knowledge and skills with respect to leadership. In this way, they would be capable to understand the measures taken in leadership and would apply in the major professional area.

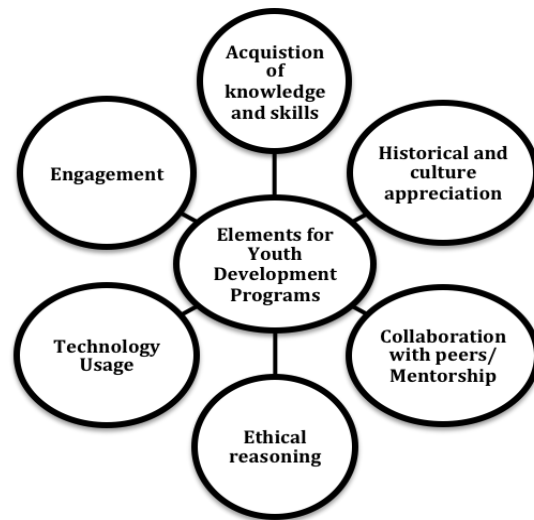


Fig 2: Principles for Implementing Youth Development Programs

Another principle illustrated in [21] is that youth development programs must include historical knowledge as well through which they become capable to perceive the 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 particular practices, in which awareness is being promoted while tolerating other opinions, cultures, and societies must be integrated as well.

Networking and collaborating with peers in certain situations is also vital in the youth development program, which is considered before initiating the program at a 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 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 digital natives. Highlighting the widespread advances in technology and communication, booming economic developments and increased competition, [22] expressed their concern to prepare youths in meeting the challenges of the new century. In this regard, he introduced the skills needed 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.

V. CONCLUSION

The paper is presents taxonomy of youth development programs initiated by different entities worldwide, highlighting on the categories and sub-categories of youth

development programs. Additionally, principles 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 so that 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.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to express our gratitude to the Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka for giving us the supports and facilities for the conduct of the related post-graduate research.

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