

Youth Development : A Program Framework

青少年發展之計劃架構

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本文主要是提供一個全面而詳細的青少年發展計劃的架構。青少年發展對於任何青少年服務組織來說，角色相當重要。而計劃可被視為協助青少年發展其本身的一項重要工具，這些計劃不單止可以帶給青少年學習知識、技能，和獨立思考的機會，而且能夠令青少年更有效地從各機構提供的服務和活動中獲益。計劃的架構可被視為解釋一些構思和現象的系統或結構。學術改進、休閒活動、健康推廣計劃、同伴輔導、生活技能之建立、職業及就業問題、領袖發展及服務學習等等，都是本文討論的主要計劃架構。

Introduction

Youth development serves as an integrating theme upon which the programs, services and activities of any youth service organization can be focused. Edginton and Oliveira (1995) have written elsewhere that the concept of youth development is multi dimensional and can be viewed from human growth, philosophical and/or programming perspectives. Pittman and Wright (1991) suggest, in fact, that there is no universally accepted definition of youth development, but rather it may be more profitable to focus on competencies that assist youth in their development.

Competency frameworks, such as those suggested by Pittman and Wright and others provide a foundation upon which programs, services and activities can be structured, formatted and implemented. Some critiques of the competency-oriented philosophy of youth development promote the idea of critical thinking (Bulgarelli and Almeida, 1978). In this, it is suggested that providing youth with competencies to serve the available social market is not an end of itself. Instead, society should encourage its youth to think and promote social change and thus look into cultural transformation and reconceptualization of the market structure.

Programs, activities and services can be thought of as vehicles that are used to assist youth in their development. As such, these programs carry to youth the opportunity for knowledge, competency, skill development and/or critical thinking. Programs provide benefits or the expectation that such benefits can be achieved through the participants in the services or activities provided by youth service organisations. Often the programs provided by youth organizations encourage self-direction, leadership, improvement of one's sense of self-worth, good health status, intrapersonal/ interpersonal skills, coping skills, problem solving, awareness of vocational and avocational options, values related to community living and many others.

A Program Framework for Youth Development

This article presents a program framework for the comprehensive delivery of youth development services. A framework can be thought of as structure or a system for explaining some phenomena or set of related ideas. Figure 1 illustrates a model of a potential framework for youth development programs, services and activities. The program framework described in this article includes the following: academic enrichment, leisure activities, health promotion program, peer mentoring, life skill building, vocational/career, leadership development, service learning (community/civic), outreach services, and clubs/special interest groups. Following is a discussion of each of these program areas of youth development and examples of these programs as found contemporarily in the United states.

Academic Enrichment. Youth development programs can play an important role in increasing the quality, value, effectiveness and power of scholastic, educational or learning activities. By providing environments in which learning opportunities are featured, knowledge, critical thinking and cognitive growth may be enhanced. Academic enrichment programs may be operated in a parallel and collaborative fashion with more traditional learning environments, such as a public school system, or they may be organized independently. Such programs may assist youth by proficiency improvement and/or by adding to and enriching their knowledge or skill base.

Academic enrichment programs found in youth service organizations involves many varying topics and formats. In 1994, the Hispanic association of Colleges and Universities operate Youth Enrichment Centers in conjunction with elementary schools. Programs include: tutoring center, reading circle, story time center, young authors area, observation/discovery, music/movement center, arts and games center and computer center. Participation in these types of programs have shown improvement in grades and in school attendance. Another example is the After Class Enrichment (ACE) Program operated by the Prince William County (Virginia) Park Authority. Some of the academic enrichment activities incorporated into the program are tutor time, adventure in the classroom, creative creatures, fun with fitness, environmental activities, cooperative games, foreign language, computer games, simple science, photography, drama, and ceramics.

Leisure Activities. In the Carnegie Corporation's landmark report, *A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours*, it is noted that a large portion (42 percent) of the average day a youth in the United States is spent as discretionary or leisure time (Timmer, Eccles, & O'Brien, 1985). From an historical perspective leisure activities, usually emphasizing fun as well as other values and benefits, have been an important components of the programming offerings of youth organization. When organized as part of an organization's program of services, leisure activities are constructed in a purposeful way often emphasizing instrumental ends aimed at promoting the social, physical, cultural, intellectual and/or spiritual well-being or development ends such as amusement, diversion or entertainment sometimes referred as the "fun morality" (Fine & Mechling, 1993).

There are a wide range of leisure activities that may be planned, organized and implemented by a youth service organization. Edginton, Hanson and Edginton (1992) have identified multiple areas in which leisure activities can be provided. Leisure program area include: the arts -- visual arts, crafts, performing arts, new arts -- literary activities, aquatics, sports, games, athletics. outdoor recreation, social recreation, self improvement, wellness activities, hobbies, and touring and travel. These authors also suggest that these activities can be organized in a variety of formats such as: competitive, drop-in, class, club, special event, workshop, interest group, and outreach. (Ibid). Combining leisure program areas and formats provides an infinite number of activity combinations.

Leadership Development. Leaders ought to help shape and elevate the motives and goals of others (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). They create images, metaphors and models that focus attention; in effect, their efforts create meaning for other (Peter, 1987). Leadership involves passion, flexibility, excitement, as well as the wisdom to reconcile followers' need and wants in such a way as to promote a common vision or end. Helping youth develop or discover their potential for leadership and build capacity for leadership within youth is a prime goal of many youth service organizations. Leadership development, therefore, is a program area that is dictated to promoting opportunities for youth that place them in leadership roles and also assist youth in identifying, discovering and development the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary in exercising leadership.

There are numerous examples of programs aimed at discovering and development the leadership potential of youth. The University of Northern Iowa's Camp Adventure™ Youth Services program implements a leadership development program aimed at youth ages 15-19. Using both didactic and experiential learning modalities this organization enables participants to learn basic leadership skills as well as gain knowledge of the operational aspects of a camp environment. Another organization, Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) provides an example of how to incorporate a leadership development program within a broader framework. The YCC program is conducted within a resident camp format over a period of six-weeks. Youth participate in conservation/environmental projects and are also taught skills related to commitment to long range goals, building a sense of self esteem, personal discipline, teamwork and leadership. This program includes tutoring

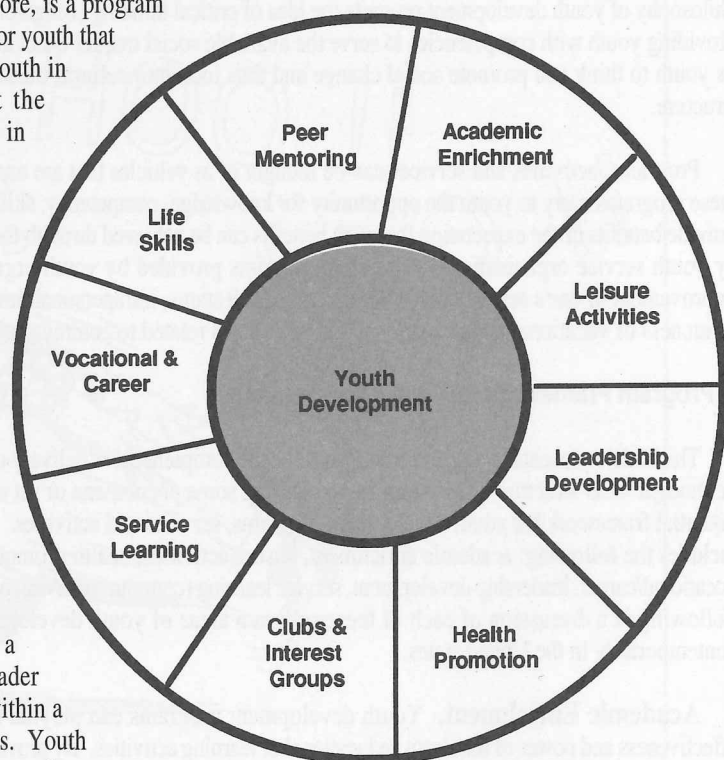


Figure 1
A Program Framework for Youth Development

activities, and engaging in community service.

Service Learning. Service learning programs encourage youth to give of themselves in meaningful and worthwhile ways. Youth often find themselves engaged in volunteer civic or community work. Learning from life experiences while giving to others is a powerful medium of youth development. Edginton and Edginton (1995) have written that "... services learning may be instrumental in helping youth learn to work with others, gain an understanding of community service, develop life skills, demonstrate caring and commitment, and other benefits." The National Center for Service in Early Adolescence (Halsted, 1994) encourage early participation in a form of community services by youth. It defines "service learning" as a form of community service that involves youth, combining meaningful volunteer service with on-going reflection. Another perspective finds that service learning....

is a carefully monitored experience in which a student has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what he or she is learning throughout the experience. Service learning programs emphasize the accomplishment of tasks which address community issues and include features which foster participants' learning about larger social issues and an understanding of reciprocal learning and service which can occur between students and community members (University of Northern Iowa, 1995).



Service learning programs engage youth in prosocial behaviors, helping them to develop healthy interpersonal skills, foster emotional growth, encourage caring and responsibility, gain in understanding of community service, increase the ability to work with other, assist in the development of career objectives, expand the willingness to learn and assist in the development of a sense of self. According to Schine (1990), "Probably the central need or task in adolescence . . . is what the scholars call identity formation -- trying to find the answer to the question: Who am I?" Service learning can help youth answer this question with positive responses related to caring and competence.

AmeriCorps offers a variety of service opportunities for youth 17 and over as well as for older persons. It has been called the new domestic Peace Corps, where youth contribute service in exchange for help in financing their higher education or repaying student loans. Another program, "Youth as Resources" (YAR) sponsored by the National Crime Prevention Council holds that young people need not wait until they reach adulthood to participate in community life. Instead it capitalizes on the creative energy, enthusiasm and altruism of young people. Those qualities are channeled into direct service to those in need -- children, the elderly, low-income resident, homeless families and others -- and promote profound changes, YAR service projects, and other similar activities, also give structure to the youth's nonschool experiences.

Outreach Services. Youth, like adults, live their lives in a cornucopia of environments. To be with or share influence with youth, leaders must extend themselves by reaching out to youth in their places of sustenance, play, work and study. Discussing the work of street youth workers in Brazil, Oliveira (1994) has written very eloquently, yet simply, to convey the power of this mandate, nothing that "... we are in the streets, because they are in the streets.." Outreach programs are directed at youth in their environments, at times and places that are convenient to youth.

What is outreach? What is its purposes? Outreach efforts are designed to reach out to youth who are: 1) alienated from service; 2) currently excluded from service; and/or 3) who are not knowledgeable about services, using developmentally-sound programs, service and personal interaction to empower youth to meet their needs (Edginton & Edginton, 1995). Outreach services are provided to respond to needs that are not met by traditional facility, program and service strategies/structures. Outreach can be views from several different general orientations -- as 1) an activity/program strategy; 2) therapy/intervention; 3) state of mind/attitude; 4) free interface/presence; 5) as defined by time and/or location; and 6) holistically. Outreach may not simply involve the provision of a set of activities. Rather, outreach may involve a complex web of activities, programs, services and personal interactions that respond to situation-specific, site-specific and individual-specific needs.

Life Skill Building. Youth are empowered when they are able to develop life skills that enable them to meet life's challenges and move easily into the adult world. according to Pittman and Wright (1991)

Life skills training is ... the formal teaching of requisite skills for surviving, living with others, and succeeding in a complex society. Because of profound changes in our society over the past few decades, it can no longer be assumed that these skills are automatically learned.

... Adolescents need help in acquiring a range of social competencies to cope with academics, to meet fundamental challenges of forming stable human relationships, to maintain hope about their future, to understand and adopt health promoting behaviors, to make wise decisions about life options and to optimize use of social networks.

Adolescents need general problem solving skills, planning and decision-making skills, cognitive strategies for resisting peer or media influences, skills for increasing self-monitoring and self-regulation, coping strategies to deal with everyday stresses (p.3).

Youth leaders should attempt to provide an environment in which youth can build life skills and better understand themselves and their world. Life skills include ability to handle conflict, ability to make decision and solve problems, ability to make positive and healthy choices, ability to value others, ability to achieve success in school/employment and other practical skills and knowledge.

Some youth-serving agencies have long focused on the development of life skills, e.g. Camp Fire, Inc., Boys and Girls Clubs and others. However, as a result of the widening discrepancy between the support youth need and the support they receive, other community youth-serving organization are increasingly targeting the area of "life skills" as an important one in the overall development of youth. Life skills are factors related practical daily living which, if possessed by youth, increase the likelihood of their successful progression toward adulthood, as well as continuing success as an adult.

Health Promotion Programs. The term health promotion refers to a set of processes that can be employed to change the conditions that affect health (Simons-Morton, Greene, & Gottlieb, 1995). The idea of health promotion was initially promoted in the United States by the Surgeon General in the report "Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promoting and Disease Prevention." (USDHHS, 1979). Basically, health promoting is focused on improving the lifestyle of individuals in such a way as promoting a healthier life. Health promotion begins with the assumption that people are basically healthy and "... seeks the development of community and individual measures which can help them to develop lifestyles that can maintain and enhance the state of well being." (USDHHS, 1979). Health promotion has fostered "wellness" types of attitudes that promotes a concern for one's individual's healthy living (Dunn, 1977; O'Donnell, 1994). It is evident that health promotion is a multifaceted construct that has many components. Health issues related to the well-being of youth include such factors as physical fitness, nutrition, substance abuse, sexuality, safety, emotional health, stress management, environmental wellness, and use of leisure time. Large health care organizations such as the American Red Cross have health promotions programs targeting youth. On the other hand, youth service organizations of differing context, size, and scope have also developed health promotion components. Traditional youth organizations such as the Girl Scouts of the USA provide informal education programs that include attention to the well-being of individuals by promoting topics related to healthy living such as nutrition, fitness and self-image. Smaller, community-based organizations have also embraced health promotion. For example, District 202, a community-oriented non-profit Minnesota-based youth center committed to providing social, cultural, and educational activities provide health related information, especially aimed at reducing the risk of HIV/STD transmission.



Peer Mentoring. Peer mentoring programs are found in a number of youth serving organizations. Essentially peer mentoring emphasize the concept of "youth leading youth." "Youth leading youth" means young persons providing some form of assistance, guidance, counsel, instruction or advice to others. The concept of mentoring can be thought of as a process where the individual provides wise and trusted advice to another. A mentor is often seen as an individual with special levels of knowledge, skill and/or experience. Mentorship involves developing trusting relationship.

An example of peer mentoring is available from the Boys Scouts of America where senior Boy Scouts serve as advisors to Cub Scout dens and packs. Such individuals serve as role models to younger scouts. They provide valuable information, advice and counsel directed toward helping younger scouts embrace the values and ways of the scouting program. Another example comes from the work of the Brazilian National Movement of Street Children (NMSC). In that framework, youth who are currently or have been living in the streets are trained to help others who are in the same situation. NMSC has been internationally recognized as a successful model program for resocialization of street children.

Vocational/Career/Employment. The term vocation refers to both a human approach to life and thus a philosophical conceptualization, or a service field organized for enabling youth to participate in the job market. As a human condition and a philosophical conceptualization, vocation expresses how human beings define their place within a social world, and how they transcend instrumentality, i.e., how we connect to spiritual growth. As a service field oriented towards the job market, vocational services instrumentalize youth, helping them to develop skills and acquire desirable competencies in specific occupations.

Both definitions of vocation must be understood in order to build programs that attend both to the immediate and long term needs of youth. Youth have immediate needs, such as finding a job, or deciding for short term employment. On the other hand, youth serving agencies may find the need to help the youth building long term commitment that results in meaningful professional choices and life careers. In this area, the most common programs are oriented to employment, occupational training, and vocational skill development. Program oriented towards in-depth examination of the youths' "callings" in life, are not easily found, except in religious institutions, where vocation is treated as a religious matter.

Vocational programs of the instrumental kind are found connected to social welfare programs, where youth are counseled and trained to find a job in order to get off welfare, and in connection with the formal education system. Community Colleges and Technical Institutes are common place, in the United States, where vocational programs are prominent part.

Clubs/Special Interest Groups. The groups with which youth associate have a strong influence on the formulation of their identity. Youth service organizations have historically recognized this factor as evidenced by the formulation of such structures as dens, packs, patrols, teams, adventure clubs, troops, activity clubs, and others. As Fine and Mechling (1993) have written such groupings provide youth "... with a sense of place and importance, a sense of belonging, loyalty, a selfless rendering of service and even sacrifice for others, peer-sponsored morality, significant amounts of enjoyment, as well as goal-directed activity." Edginton, Hanson and Edginton (1992) have provided definitions for the terms clubs and interest groups. They note that a club is "... a group of persons organized for some particular purpose ... formed on the basis of age group, activity interest, or for some exchange of information and ideas. "Similarly, they suggest that "... an interest group is a collection of individuals that has formed around an activity, issue or program area."

Municipal governments and non-profit organization in the United States have traditionally provided clubs and interest groups. The City of Phoenix (Arizona) Parks, Recreation and Library Department, for example, offer a variety of clubs directed at youth. One of their centers, the South Phoenix Youth center, provides clubs that "... offer a safe and positive environment for teens to explore and express their ideas, their values, and themselves." The club program also provide opportunities for youth to participate in adventure trips, banquets, and special performance city wide. Some of the activities offered include: theater, dance, modeling and video. The Cub Scout program of the Boy Scouts of America provides a historically time-tested model for organizing club activities for boys ages 7 through 10. Individuals are organized into dens, dens in turn are clustered into packs. Dens are neighbourhood based and provide boys with the opportunity to increase their skills, develop physically and mentally, build self-confidence and personal reliance, and instill a sense of pride. The programs, through association with others, help promote teamwork.

Concluding Comments

Societies face, globally, challenges that have brought more awareness to issues impacting youth lives. Today, more than in the past, youth rights, youth policy, and youth programs have become integral part of society's investment in the future. Issues relating to youth have become, in some way, a priority world wide. Policy-makers, and the larger community, mostly agree that programs promoting youth development are central to the stability and advancement of human societies.

Professional, educators, and others with vested interests in youth development need to be aware of the nature and complexity

of the conditions impacting youth. They also need to acquire knowledge, and master skills that help them to address youth issues. A better understanding of youth development programs and services can provide a basis for improving professional practice, thus helping professional and volunteer youth workers, educators and other to properly respond to the challenges facing youth today.

This article has presented a framework for youth development programs in the United States and elsewhere. In this discussion, the definitions and operational principles of these programs were examined, and examples were given for each defined area of youth development. The framework provides a practical language, and describes the professional areas of practice. Professionals, practitioners and educators, working with and/or for youth may find value in conceptualization of youth development programs and services as presented. Also, the article may shed light in the linkages between theoretical constructs, definitions, and the way in which these are translated into professional practice.

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