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The Current State of Youth Leadership Development Programming in Nebraska

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Introduction

Young leaders are an underutilized resource that can significantly impact a community's human resource portfolio, as such, their development is essential as the vast transfer of wealth (\$75 trillion by 2060; Macke, Markley, & Binerer, 2011) and shift in leadership (56 percent of all management occupations transferred within 20 years; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012) the United States will experience. Currently, metrics for determining the impacts of leadership development and leadership education efforts are severely inadequate (Kellerman, 2013; Klau, 2006). Because of this, we have insufficient evidence to validate which efforts actually promote the influential capacity of young leaders. Community resources are limited and students are only getting busier, so we must be able to present economically minded justification that our youth leadership development programs are actually developing young leaders in ways that are positively influencing communities.

The research question of this study is,

"What is the state of youth leadership development programming in Nebraska?"

To address this question, information from youth leadership development organizations were collected using this phone interview script:

1. How does your organization conceptualize/define leadership?
2. What educational techniques does your program use to teach leadership?
 - a) Choose from the list of signature pedagogies in leadership education included in figure 1 (Jenkins, 2012).
3. How does your organization assess leadership development of the youth?
4. How does your organization assess the success of their programs?
5. How many people have participated in the program?
 - a) Annually?
 - b) Total?
6. How long has the program been running?
7. What is your target population?
 - a) Age/grade?
 - b) Interest (e.g. FBLA is business, underrepresented populations, etc)
 - c) Is the program application based/restrictive?
8. Is there a cost associated with your program?

Methods

Program Inclusion

To identify youth leadership development programs, the following criteria were selected:

- 1) the organization/program's mission statement needed to include youth leadership development as one of its primary goals, and 2) the organization/program's target age range must be youth ranging from 6th grade to 12th grade.

To begin finding programs to include in the research "Youth leadership development in Nebraska" was entered into a Google search. At the time of the search, 32 pages of results were produced. A member of the research team reviewed each entry, searching for mission statements and the age ranges of the target population to determine if the organization/program met the inclusion criteria. From the initial search, 19 total organizations met the criteria. Additionally, each organization contacted was also asked if they knew of any other youth leadership development programs, and if so, if they could provide the name and contact information. An additional six organizations were included in the project.

Table 1

Responses to Program Questions

Name of Program/ Organization	Sponsor/ Affiliation	Founded	Active Par.	Total Par.	Ages
NHRI	UNL	1949	180	~6,000	K-12 th grade
Y. Lead. Omaha	Creighton	1992	40	~480	H.S. Sophomores
Leadership Lincoln	Non-profit	1996	40-45	~855	H.S. Sophomores
Y. Lead. Kearney	Chamber of Comm.	1994	25	500	H.S. Juniors
Y. Lead. Tomorrow	Grand Is. Chamber	1998	35	~570	H.S. Seniors
Nebraska FFA	FFA	1928	7,400	N.K.	7 th grade - 21 years
LAUNCH	Non-profit	1961	1,500	N.K.	6 th grade - 12 th grade
YELP	UNL Extension	2013	14	25	H.S. Sophomores
Y. Lead. Academy	Fremont Chamber	2010	21	120	H.S. Juniors
Nebraska FBLA	FBLA	1962	N.K.	N.K.	6 th grade- 12 th grade
Nothing But Net	Non-profit	2000	800	N.K.	Pre-K - 8 th grade
Rotary Y. Lead. Seminar	Rotary Council	2011	50	237	H.S. Juniors
NE Y. Leadership Council	NE Dept. Vocational Rehab and Special Ed	2009	29	70	Ages 14-24
Project Everlast	Non-profit	2002	~60	N.K.	Ages 14-24

Note. N.K. = not known. NHRI = Nebraska Human Resources Institute. YELP = Youth Engaged in Leading Phelps.

Table 2

Randomized Order of Responses to Program Questions

Randomized Organizations	Definition of leadership	Assessment of youth leadership development	Application	Cost
1.	No	No	Yes	Yes
2.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
3.	No	Yes	No	Yes
4.	No	Yes	Yes	No
5.	No	No	Yes	No
6.	No	Yes	No	No
7.	No	No	Yes	Yes
8.	Yes	Yes	Nomination	No
9.	No	Yes	Nomination	No
10.	No	No	Yes	Yes
11.	No	No	Yes	Yes
12.	No	No	Yes	No
13.	No	No	No	No
14.	No	Yes	Yes	No

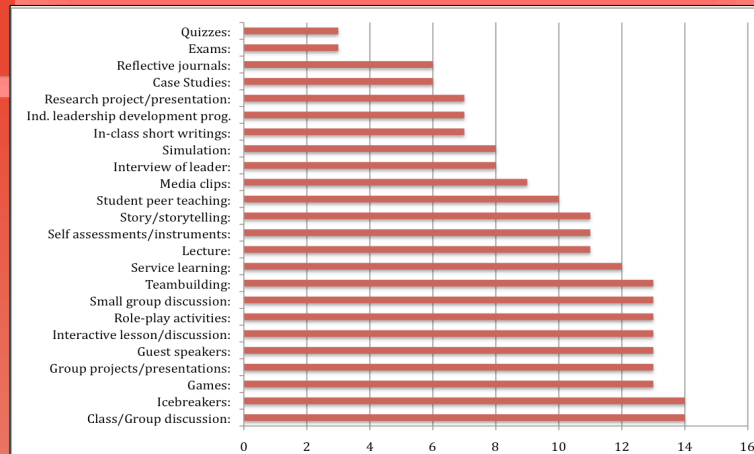


Figure 1. Frequency of Techniques Used in Youth Leadership Development Programming

Results

The data from each organization regarding name, sponsor, year founded, number of participants (current and total), and age of participants is included in table 1.

The data regarding whether or not each organization has formal definitions of leadership, formal assessments of youth leadership development, application processes, and costs associated with the program are randomized and included in table 2.

The educational techniques used in the different programs was assessed with the second question of the interview and is included in figure 1. The techniques are organized from the least popular to the most popular among youth leadership development curriculums

Discussion

In this study it is important to note that not all youth leadership development curriculums are the same, and all programs execute leadership development differently because of the diverse perspectives available in the different communities.

Apparent Strengths of Leadership Programming

- The broad range of interests that serve as platforms for youth leadership development programming.
- The strong desire for all demographics to be represented and to introduce diversity to youth leadership development participants.
- Significant state-wide efforts to build a next generation of young leaders.

Opportunities for Improving Leadership Programming

- Implementing formal definitions of leadership to provide unambiguous standards that are understandable for youth participants.
- Creating a widely available, psychometrically sound measure of youth leadership to assess the development of young leaders with quantifiable evidence that proves the success of youth leadership development programming.
- Introducing accessible curriculum for young leaders in rural areas that may see location or distance as an obstacle.
- Minimizing the cost barrier that may prevent available, high-potential students from participating in leadership development programming.

Additional discussion questions that have been raised due to the findings of this research include:

1. How can Nebraska make youth leadership development programming more available to youth in rural communities?
2. How can youth leadership development organizations minimize cost barriers, although relatively inexpensive, may prevent a student from participating/applying?
3. How must youth leadership development experts move forward to create a widely available, psychometrically sound measure of youth leadership that would provide quantifiable evidence that youth leadership development programs are developing youth leaders?

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