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Short Communication

Training needs of youth organizational leaders in Nigeria

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FEO, conceived idea, collected data and analysis; MJK, preparation of manuscript

Abstract

Training needs of youth leaders in Ikpoba-Okha, Egor and Oredo Local Government Areas of Edo State, Nigeria were studied. Data were obtained using a combination of structured questionnaire and interview schedule to source information from 120 youth leaders drawn from randomly selected youth organizations. Data collected on respondents' personal characteristics, participation in and re-training in leadership skills were described using frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis was used to test the relationship between the training needs and some selected variables. Out of the several youth leadership activities implemented, participation in community activities (mean = 2.67), human relations (mean = 2.97) and motivating other youths (mean=3.0) ranked highest. Training needs were expressed as highly required in motivating other youths (mean=3.15), promotion of community service (mean = 3.05) and discussion of current issues (mean=3.18). Youths leadership training needs showed significant positive relationship with family size ($r = 0.235$) and educational level ($r = 0.290$). Capacity building for the youth leaders in identified areas should be done by relevant government youth development agencies.

Keywords: leadership, training needs, youths, organization, participation

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INTRODUCTION

Youth are an asset to any society because of the need for continuity and sustainability of communities. About 25% of Nigerian population comprise of youth with an age range of 19-40 years (Otor and Ejembi, 2005). The population of youth in Nigeria from the 2006 population census using age bracket of 15-30 and going by the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) limits is about 60 million (NBS, 2012). They are a potential resource for sustainable development of any nation. They develop interest in various careers and aspire to take over from the older generations (Adisa, 2005). Oloruntoba, (2002) asserts that youths in all countries are both a major human resource for development and key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovations. Although, youth aspire to take over from the older generations, they however need opportunities to get educated in these future endeavors as leaders.

Leadership is the act of influencing people to cooperate towards the achievement of common goals (Ekong, 2005). This involves qualities/attributes such as boldness, initiative, empathy, knowledge, leadership skills among others. Aims of youth organizations according to Otor and Ejembi (2005) could be classified into educational, economic, social and recreational. These require good leaders to guide the process through which the aims are to be achieved. In

recognition of the importance of youths and their leadership in national development, relevant skills to improve their effectiveness need to be identified. The training and guidance of youths in various programs in any community is vested in various leaders including school teachers, religious leaders, and extension workers and others who should be in regular contact with the youths. Robertson (2014) identified seven areas in which youth need to develop leadership skills. These are attitude (the leadership personality), time management, planning, organizing, staffing, leading, and facilitating.

It is a belief among social scientists that leadership roles demands specific kind of knowledge and skills from the person fulfilling the role (Williams, 2004). Therefore, leadership is one of these skills that must be practiced to be mastered. Good leadership involves planning ahead, and having a vision of what needs to be done. It has to do with how to motivate others, helping others to work as a team, and putting aside self-want in order to help the team to function properly. Organization is a good platform for providing opportunities for acquiring leadership skills but it is usually a big challenge to have leaders who can serve as good role models for prospective young leaders.

Training is another organizational process through which specific leadership skills can be acquired. Training is an educational process for knowledge and skills acquisition

leading to desired changes in attitude and improvement of competence of the trainee. The end product is the development of innate leadership and managerial ability, intellectual understanding of the technical know-how of the management situation (Ekpere, 1990). It is affirmed that training needs have to be determined before training programs can be relevant, so that real needs of trainees are met Oyedele (2001). These needs or gaps according to Oloruntoba (2002) include gaps in knowledge, skill, attitude and behavior. Youth programs are educational processes aimed at developing and bridging these gaps.

Youth development programs are often offered by youth organizations such as Red Cross, Scout Association, Man O' War, and a host of religious youth associations abound in the study area. These organizations focus on experiential learning or learning by doing; it is also an important element of leadership development. This kind of learning blends learning experiences with opportunities to share, discuss, process relevant thoughts and feelings and generalizes these into principles and guidelines for living and apply what has been learned to other situation (Boyd, 2001). In most cases only few youth volunteer leaders possess all the qualities of effective leadership. Leadership training can provide leaders with the opportunity to learn more about their roles and increase capacity development or effective leadership. This study was therefore undertaken to assess the training needs of youth organizational leaders in Egor, Ikpoba-Okha and Oredo Local government Areas of Edo State.

The specific objectives were to; examine the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, identify the youth leadership activities implemented by the organizations, examine the level of participation of youths in those activities; and identify the leadership training needs of the respondents

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Egor, Oredo and Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Edo State all located in Edo south geopolitical zone. Oredo, Egor, Ikpoba-Okha local government areas comprised 12, 10 and 10 wards, respectively. The study focused on leadership training needs of youth organizations in Edo State, under the umbrella of the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN) which is the apex body of all youth organizations. Two (2) wards were randomly selected from each local government area. A total of 120 youth leaders were selected by a simple random process for the study with 40 from each local government area. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaire and interview schedule. The questionnaire and interview schedule consisted of 4 sections which teased out corresponding variables. These were (i) socio-economic characteristics of respondents; (ii) youth leadership activities implemented by the organizations, (iii) the level of participation of youth leaders

A list of activities (24) was presented to respondents to select the ones they are engaged in. Participation of youth leaders in leadership activities was measured to obtain ordinal data using a scale of very low (1), low (2), high (3) and very high (4). A mean of ≥ 2.5 was taken to imply high participation and a mean of < 2.5 taken as low participation. The maximum score obtainable in each of the two sections was 23. The leadership activities were classified into three sections, namely, communication activities, planning and implementation activities, and support services activities consisting of 4, 10 and 10 activities (items) respectively. Section (IV) the leadership training needs of youth leaders and 23 question items (the respondents were asked to indicate leadership activities involved in which they require training with and four Likert-type scale options was used; of highly needed (3), needed (2), just needed (1) and undecided (0).

Data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation for objectives (i) - (iii). Pearson's Product correlation (PPMC) was used to determine the significant relationship between selected socio-economic characteristics and the training needs of the youth leaders.

RESULTS

Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Data in Table 1 showed that majority of the respondents were males (56.7%), single (68.3%), with Ordinary National Diploma/National Certificate of Education (30.0 %), between the age group of 18-25 years (31.7%), Christians (56.7%). Only 11.7% were engaged in full time farming while civil servants, teachers and traders were 28.3%, 21.7% and 8.3% respectively.

Membership of youth organizations

As shown in Table 2, majority of the youths involved in leadership activities belonged to the Red Cross Society (35.0%), then the Scout Association (20.0%) and least for the Girl's Brigade.

Participation of youths in leadership development activities

Table 3 highlighted leadership activities and level of participation by youth. The youths were involved in all activities. However, participation in communication, planning and implementation activities was generally low while provision of support activities was high. The highest level of youth leaders' participation was observed with motivating other youths and mobilizing other youths with mean scores of 3.0 and the lowest level of participation was in agricultural extension trainings (mean = 1.13). However, on the basis of the standard deviation scores, there were small variations in the level of participation in communication, planning and implementation leadership activities than they were with provision of support services.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents by personal characteristics

Personal characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	68	56.7
Female	52	43.3
Total	120	100.0
Marital Status		
No response	4	3.3
Single	82	68.3
Married	28	23.3
Divorced	6	5.0
Total	120	100.0
Age		
< 20 yrs	36	30.0
18-25 yrs	39	31.7
26-33 yrs	26	21.7
34-40 yrs	18	15.0
No response	2	1.7
Total	120	100.0
Educational level		
No formal education	6	5.0
Primary school	8	6.7
JSCE	12	10.0
SSCE	22	18.3
OND/NCE	36	30.0
HND*/Degree	24	20.0
No response	12	10.0
Total	120	100.0
Family size		
1-5	62	51.7
6-10	32	26.7
>10	12	10.0
No response	14	11.6
Total	120	100.0
Occupation		
Full time farming	14	11.7
Civil Servant	34	28.3
Teaching	26	21.7
Trading	10	8.3
No response	36	30.0
Total	120	100.0
Religion		
Islam	4	3.3
Christianity	26	21.7
Traditional	68	56.7
Religion	22	18.4
Total	120	100.0

. *Higher National Diploma, (Junior School Certificate of Education, Senior School Certificate; Ordinary National Diploma/National Certificate of Education)

Training needs of youths in leadership activities

As shown in Table 4, training needs were expressed in virtually all the activities except agricultural extension training activities with mean score of 1.16. The most highly needed training was indicated for motivating other youths (3.27) while no desire for training was expressed for agricultural extension training activities. The standard deviation figures particularly express the fact that leadership skills gaps exist among the youth leaders in the study area.

Relationships between the socio-economic characteristics and training needs of respondents:

Correlation analysis results in Table 5 revealed that out of three independent variables studied, two variables exhibited positively significant relationship with need for

Table 2: Distribution of youth leaders according to membership of youth organizations

Youth organization		
Red cross	42	35.0
Scout association	24	20.0
Man O' war	10	8.3
Anglican	8	6.7
Youth Catholic	4	3.4
Youth Baptize	6	5.0
Youth Christian Fellowship	10	8.3
Boys Brigade of Nigeria	4	3.4
Girls Brigade of Nigeria	2	1.7
Auxiliary youth	4	3.3
Regal ambassador youth	6	5.0
Total	120	100.0

Table 3: Mean distribution of youths' participation in leadership development activities.

Leadership activities	Mean	S.D	Remark
Communication activities			
Effectively Communicating decision to others	2.32	0.887	Low
Offering support to others	2.33	0.892	Low
Providing input and feedback to the community program	2.33	0.889	Low
Openness in discussing current issues in the community one's action and attitude toward others	2.18	1.092	Low
Planning and implementation activities			
Promoting community service	2.15	0.766	Low
Reviewing grant proposals	2.23	0.766	Low
Making funding decisions	2.13	0.900	Low
Display of specific skills	2.27	0.877	Low
Influencing and motivating one's peer	2.23	0.827	Low
Accessible to others youth and interest adults	2.35	0.868	Low
Making healthy choice for oneself and encouraging those choice in others	2.38	0.989	Low
Participation in agricultural extension trainings	1.13	1.031	Low
Provision of support services to local government administration			
Attending monthly meetings to discuss current issues that affect youth's community	2.28	0.972	Low
Observe local officials when performing their duties	2.57	1.027	High
Helping the less fortunate/privileged	2.67	1.079	High
Fund raising for charity for kids	2.67	1.079	High
Promoting other kinds of community service	2.67	1.125	High
Human Resource Development	2.75	1.045	High
Mobilizing other youths	3.00	1.130	High
Human relation	2.97	1.069	High
Motivating other youths	3.00	1.037	High
Participation in community activities	2.30	1.435	Low

Mean ≥ 2.5 implies high participation and mean < 2.5 is low participation; S.D = Standard deviation.

training in communication, planning, implementation and provision of support services leadership skills activities. The results showed that education had positive and significant relationship with communication ($r = 0.290$, $P < 0.05$), planning and implementation ($r = 0.259$, $P < 0.01$) and provision of support services ($r = 0.235$, $P < 0.05$) leadership skills activities. Family size had positive and significant relationship with communication leadership training needs of respondents.

DISCUSSION

The youth constitute a high percentage of Nigerian population (NBS, 2009). In Edo State, youth of the age group of 18-25 years represent majority of the youth population. Youths are one of the Edo State's most potent and latent resource. If the energy and enthusiasm of this population can be guided for constructive work and their imagination kindled, it could help the state become one of the most prosperous states in Nigeria (Ajayi, 2006). The training needs desired by the youth leaders in Table 4 reflect the fact that motivating other youth will require communication and participatory skills through training.

Table 4: Mean distribution of youth leaders by training needs in leadership activities.

Leadership activities	Mean	S.D	Remark
Communication activities			
Effectively Communicating decision to others	2.97	0.879	Needed
Offering support to others	2.88	1.070	Needed
Providing input and feedback to the community program	2.75	1.031	Needed
Openness in discussing current issues in the community one's action and attitude toward others	2.95	1.076	Needed
Planning and implementation activities			
promoting community service	3.05	0.924	Needed
Reviewing grant proposals	3.10	1.095	Needed
Making funding decisions	3.12	1.039	Needed
Display of specific skills	3.08	1.134	Needed
Influencing and motivating one's peer	2.95	0.942	Needed
Accessible to others youth and interest adults	2.85	1.050	Needed
Making healthy choice for oneself and encouraging those choice in others	2.95	0.942	Needed
Participation in agricultural extension trainings	1.16	0.913	Not needed

Table 5: Correlation analysis results showing relationship between respondents' personal characteristics and leadership training needs.

Personal characteristics	Youth leadership activities	
	Communication skills (r)	Planning and implementation activities (r)
Age	0.021	0.021
+Education	0.290*	0.259**
Family size	0.235*	0.137

*significant at 5% level; **significant at 1% level. +Education variable was quantified as follows no formal education =0; primary school =6years; JSCE =9years; SSCE =12years; OND/NCE =14years; HND/Degree =18years. i.e years spent schooling.

For example, Stafford *et al.* (2003) found that reflection immediately following a service activity has the most significant impact on leadership life skill development, especially in the areas of personal leadership and community contribution. Leadership educators agree that leadership can be taught (Stafford *et al.*, 2003). Stafford *et al.* (2003) therefore proposed service learning as an effective method for teaching leadership life skills. Service learning according to them (Stafford *et al.*, 2003) is a method under which students learn through active participation in meaningful, organized community service. Similarly, youth leaders in the study area can be provided with purposeful organizational service to the community and to society while engaging in reflection activities that enhance their leadership life-long skills. These leadership life-long skills activities should have the potential to bring about youth development, peer positive influence, socialization and change in youths in the study area. As reflected in Table 5 the more educated youth leaders are, in addition to ability to read and write, the greater the opportunities to actively participate in leadership activities in the community. Also, the youth leaders maintaining large families have higher leadership sense of responsibilities than those with small families. Youth level of maturity in terms of physical appearance, mental capacity and social

responsibilities is directly connected with age. The level and nature of youth's education is an important variable that determine leadership quality or trait and attitude towards organizational issues. Followers tend to show a kind of positive consideration for trait as sole factor for selecting a leader (Saliu and Ojandage, 2008).

CONCLUSION

Majority of the youths studied belonged to the Red Cross Society. The youth leaders participated in leadership involving community development activities. Training needs were expressed by the youth leaders in virtually all the activities except agricultural extension training activities and they were willing to receive more training that will enhance their competence.

Based on the study findings and conclusions, it is recommended that arrangements be made by relevant youth development agencies to organize leadership training workshops and seminars on a regular basis for the general youth in the study area.

Conflict of Interest None

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