

LEAD TODAY: A GLOBAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM FOR YOUTH

Using Research to Guide Design

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Introduction and Overview

Conversations about leadership and the traits needed to be an effective leader are taking place around the world. In this atmosphere, OneHope partnered with the John Maxwell Organization and produced a 15-unit program, Lead Today, to reverse the negative portrayal of leadership by offering a desirable portrait of leadership based on Biblical principles. Six sites across Ghana initially implemented the Lead Today program beginning in January 2016 and participated in a comprehensive evaluation of the full program including a pre- and post-program knowledge test and a psychometrically validated personality test that measures character strengths. Results are based on 173 youth who completed the program and showed positive growth and strong potential for a new global biblically-based youth leadership program. (See Appendix A for a summary of the Ghana evaluation report; the full evaluation report will be made available during the conference presentation)

In a more recent study, 15 sites across Cameroon implemented the Lead Today program beginning in November 2017 and participated in an evaluation of the first four lessons of the program, including a pre- and post-program knowledge test. Results of this evaluation are based on 133 youth who completed the program and again demonstrated success and strong potential. Therefore, the results of both evaluative studies demonstrate that the Lead Today program aids in the development of critical character traits and helps the student understand vital leadership and Biblical information. (See Appendix B for a summary of the Cameroon evaluation report; the full evaluation report will be made available during the conference presentation)

The Lead Today Program

Lead Today empowers teens, between the ages of 12 and 19, to lead with biblical principles by showing them a leadership model they can admire, respect and follow. The 15-unit program, which can be completed in four months if taught weekly, shares 14 of John Maxwell's essential leadership qualities including influence, vision, integrity, growth, initiative, self-discipline, timing, teamwork, attitude,

priorities, relationships, responsibility, communication, and developing leaders. OneHope offers this content-rich program at no cost to teachers or students and only wants to see young people benefit from what they can learn.

After the introductory lesson (Unit 1), which is structured slightly different, each lesson has the same structure. The sections of each lesson are:

- Leadership Quality - An introduction to the unit's leadership topic or quality – including questions students should be able to answer when the lesson is complete
- Scripture Engagement – An invitation for students to read the Bible and connect it back to the unit's leadership topic.
- Going Deeper – An explanation of the Scripture story on a deeper level, helping students to understand what they read and how it connects back to the unit's leadership topic
- Lifework – An opportunity for the facilitator (teacher) to share a proverb of leadership wisdom and give a summary of what students learned during the unit.
- Optional Activities – Activities that can be used to practice what teachers taught in the lesson.

Using Research to Guide Design

Panda and Gupta's (2014) research in the IIMB Management Review suggests a continued need to bridge the widening gap between academic and applied research. As recommended, upon completion of the evaluative studies in Ghana and Cameroon, OneHope used the results to make actionable changes to the overall program, to offer a globally contextualized program. The following are just a few examples changes OneHope made to the Lead Today program based upon the outcomes of the studies in Ghana and Cameroon.

- The Ghana evaluation utilized the original version of the Lead Today program. Upon completion of the evaluation, the program lessons were modified based upon feedback received during the pilot and evaluation. The revised version of the Lead Today program is the version in use today.

- The Lead Today Student Network was developed as a follow-up Ghana evaluative study. Upon completion of the then 16-unit program, students showed a strong desire to continue on in the program. The Lead Today Student Network meets this desire, and the program is currently being rolled out in Ghana this year. Through this continuation program, students, over a period of several months, have the opportunity to engage in practical leadership opportunities and grow into the leader God created them to be. As a part of the Lead Today Student Network, students have the opportunity to participate in serving others, be mentored, actively plan for their futures, and grow in the 14 leadership qualities introduced in the Lead Today program.
- The Cameroon evaluation utilized the current version of the Lead Today program. From this evaluation, OneHope enhanced their training resources to prepare teachers to more confidently facilitate the program.

The Lead Today program evaluation and the subsequent design enhancements demonstrate a sturdy bridge between academic research and field application. This bridge will be discussed further in the presentation at the 8th Lausanne International Researchers' Conference. Additional supplemental resources will also be shared during the presentation.



References

OneHope. (2016). Evaluation Report for Lead Today: Ghana (2016).

OneHope. (2017). Results of the Lead Today Pilot in Cameroon | Fall 2017 |.

OneHope. (2017). Lead Today *Leader's Guide*.

OneHope. (2017). Lead Today *Student Book*.

OneHope. (2018). Lead Today Student Network.

Panda, A., & Gupta, R. K. (2014). Making academic research more relevant: A few suggestions. *IIMB Management Review*, 26(3), 156-169. doi: 10.1016/j.iimb.2014.07.004



APPENDIX A

Summary of the Lead Today Evaluation in Ghana



LEAD

TODAY EVALUATION
SUMMARY
GHANA 2016

LEAD TODAY

“Without wise leadership, a nation fails.” –Proverbs 11:14

When today’s teens in Ghana think of leadership, many think of position, abuse of power, bribery and corruption. In fact, according to OneHope’s ABY research, “...Of least importance to students for their future is the ability to influence the lives of other people.”

Conversations about leadership and the traits needed to be an effective leader are taking place around the world. In this atmosphere, OneHope partnered with The John Maxwell Company, and produced the 16-week Lead Today program to reverse the negative portrayal of leadership by offering a desirable portrait of leadership based on Biblical principles. Six sites across Ghana implemented the Lead Today program beginning in January 2016 and participated in a comprehensive evaluation. Results are based on 173 students between 12 and 21 years of age who completed the program. The results show a resounding success and strong potential for a new global program.



WHAT WE LEARNED



The Lead Today program aids in the development of key character traits.

Students grew significantly in leadership, humility, fairness, teamwork, judgment, kindness, and love of learning, as well as in nine additional character strengths.



The Lead Today program helps students understand key leadership and Biblical information.

Students showed significant growth in 90% of the items that addressed leadership content and 78% of the items focused on Biblical stories.



Students and teachers think highly of the Lead Today program.

Ninety-two percent of students reported personal growth as leaders through participation in the program. Teachers corroborated this sentiment and said that their students responded well to the program.



SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN CHARACTER

The VIA Institute on Character is considered a global leader in the science of measuring character strengths. They created and scientifically validated a 96-question survey to measure 24 character strengths of youth.

This survey has been completed by thousands of youths all over the world.

OneHope administered this same survey to students both before and after the Lead Today program. **Amazingly, the VIA survey revealed significant growth in 16 of the 24 character strengths!** This independent measure speaks to the veracity of the Lead Today program on a global level.

Statistical results for the 16 character strength scales are illustrated in the following figures. By increasing these character strengths, the Lead Today Program shows great promise in its ability to positively impact the lives of young people and the communities where they live.

  = Highly Significant Growth ($p < .025$)

 = Significant Growth ($p < .05$)

Note: The most rigorous level of significance testing was applied to measuring the growth of these character strengths. Sample sizes varied from 166 to 172 as some items were missing responses, and in those instances, character strength scores were not calculated. Significance levels were based on a linear mixed model including site as a random effect and gender, age, and the number of sessions attended as fixed effects. Models for some character strengths also included interaction effects.





SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN PROGRAM CONTENT



Participants showed a significant knowledge gain on 90% of the items addressing leadership content.



Participants showed a significant knowledge gain on 78% of the items addressing biblical content.

Each Lead Today lesson includes an example of leadership from Scripture as well as a challenge for youth to take action to begin developing **influence** with others. In this way, they can make their world a better place.

A survey directly related to the program content was developed to measure student knowledge before and after the program. Some items were developed directly from the program’s leadership content, while others focused on measuring knowledge about the program’s Biblical content. An understanding of influence is an important leadership concept emphasized by Lead Today. Note the large jump in students who correctly answered the following question at post-survey, demonstrating substantial growth.

QUESTION: How can you increase your leadership ability?

ANSWER: By growing in influence.



Answered correctly pre-survey



Answered correctly post-survey

Note: Paired sample t-tests were conducted to evaluate statistical significance at $p < .05$ for these knowledge gain determinations.



POSITIVE FEEDBACK

WHAT STUDENTS SAY

- **92% of the students reported personal growth as leaders through participation in Lead Today.**
- When asked what they would do to improve the program, students responded they would like to see the program continue on and they desired more content.
- Students recognized the importance of effective leaders displaying qualities of influence, vision, discipline, diligence, humility, and kindness.

“The Lead Today program helped me to build my leadership ability. It taught me how to lead people and to do the right thing. The program also showed me how important it is to have a positive attitude.”

WHAT TEACHERS SAY

- Overwhelmingly, teachers report that they would recommend the program to other leaders and teachers.
- Teachers suggested adding more content or developing a “continuation” program. Like the students, when asked how they would improve the program, the facilitators reported that they would like to see the program grow and continue in content (additional leadership topics) or duration (more weeks).
- Teachers recommended role-play into their teaching. When asked what additional activities the facilitators integrate into the program, most reported using dramatizations or role-playing and discussion groups to support the program content. This appeared to resonate well with the students.

MOVING FORWARD

Based upon partner, student, and teacher feedback, the following program design revisions are underway.

- Incorporating **more leadership content** into the student book.
- Developing **role modeling and role playing activities** for the teachers to incorporate into their lessons.
- Considering opportunities for program graduates to **mentor** and eventually lead small groups of students going through the program.
- Investigating an alternative **modular delivery method**, such as a shorter program in which teachers would present a set of core leadership concepts to their students and have the opportunity to add additional concepts as time permits.



APPENDIX A

Summary of the Lead Today Evaluation in Cameroon



LEAD TODAY

CAMEROON

PILOT FALL 2017



4 LESSON PILOT



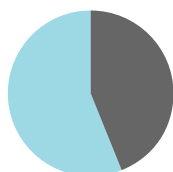
15 LOCATIONS



2 LANGUAGES

- » English
- » French

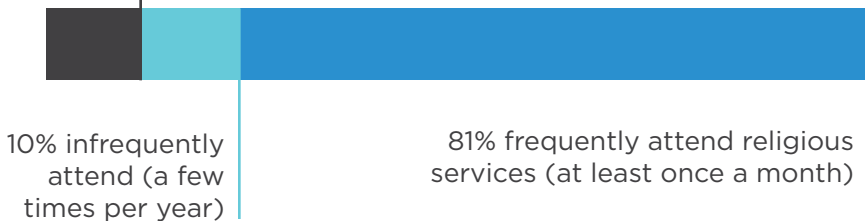
133 STUDENTS PARTICIPATED



- 56% rural
- 44% urban & semi-urban



9% of students do not typically attend religious services



94%

report growth as leaders

This pilot indicated that the *Lead Today* program can be effective in lower-literacy areas as well.



"I consider myself a leader at this point in my life."

Before

66%

After

97%

INFLUENCE

VISION

INTEGRITY

GROWTH



Students showed statistically significant knowledge gain in all four areas of leadership they studied.



Teachers rated the program highly and said they plan to use it again.



Ninety-eight percent

of students say their friends would enjoy *Lead Today* as well.