

**MAKING
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT
MEANINGFUL:
LESSONS FROM
MULTILATERAL PRACTICE**

Shifting Power: New Frontiers in Youth Participation
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Keynote Address
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STARTING ASSUMPTIONS

YOUTH!

How do we understand youth engagement in multilateral practice?

- Engagement of youth in the development and delivery of policies, programmes, knowledge and actions that shape, pursue, monitor or report on multilateral cooperation frameworks.
- Can occur at local, national, international and transnational level.

THE ROAD TRAVELLED

How has multilateral practice evolved in relation to MYE? The case of UNESCO.

1995

World Programme of
Action on Youth

**1999–
2009**

UNESCO Strategy on
Youth, youth
engagement through
government

Arab Spring and
series of youth
protests across
the world

**2010–
2013**

2014–

2026

- UNESCO Operational Strategy on Youth
- Multiplication of youth engagement spaces
- UN global frameworks of action on youth

REALITY CHECK

YOUTH!

What have we learnt about how context affects MYE in multilateral practice ?

- Construct(s) of youth
- Quality of civic space(s)
- Investment priorities and capacities
- Engagement enablers (humans, technology, civic culture)
- Other?

MYE IN ACTION WHERE AND HOW

Stages for engagement

4 Degrees of engagement



YOUTH CONSULTED

YOUTH CONTRIBUTING

YOUTH AS PARTNERS

YOUTH AS LEADERS

MYE IN ACTION

WHO AND WHAT

Who is the role youth engage as?

Representatives of a public constituency

(youth councils, advisory bodies, political parties, young diplomats, legislators, government officials, parliamentarians)

Active members of civil society and their communities

(leaders and activists; students; academics, researchers or scientists; entrepreneurs; experts and professionals; formal or informal youth groups/associations; bloggers, influencers or journalists)

What actions do youth engage through?

- Provide education, training, mentoring or capacity-building
- Advocate, raise awareness and develop communication initiatives
- Build/Mobilise networks and partnerships
- Produce knowledge or create innovation
- Provide advice, expertise, experience, knowledge

Chair

LOCAL 2 GLOBAL

The Youth As Researchers (YAR) Programme

UNESCO YAR INITIATIVES



- 2014 – UNESCO Chair, University of Galway x Foroige x UNESCO Chair, Pen State University
- 2020 – UNESCO Programme model
- Over 60 youth-led knowledge products

LOCAL 2 GLOBAL

The Youth As Researchers (YAR) Programme

- Youth as leaders, conducting research
- Youth as partners, designing the programme
- Youth consulted/contributing as research participants

LESSONS for MYE:

- Adaptation/Local sensitivity
- Policy uptake

GLOBAL 2 LOCAL

UNESCO's guidance on participatory youth policy design

- Rep. youth co-design policy at all stages
- Youth consulted/contributing variably across
- Youth lead specific implementation actions

LESSONS for MYE:

- Political commitment
- Collective Ownership
- Capacities / Resources/ Culture
- Global enabler(s)
- Representation/Participation

YOUTH!





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SHIFTING POWER

YOUTH!

through the multilateral system

- Multilateral system as an enabler
- Alliances
- Global x Local
- Evidence-informed advocacy
- Resources
- Capacities
- Flexibility x Relevance
- Accountability
- Seizing the momentum

THANK YOU!
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