



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



International Institute
for Educational Planning



Planning education with and for youth

Anja Hopma
Lynne Sergeant



IIEP Policy Forum

Planning education with and for youth

Planning education with and for youth

Part I

‘Can you hear me? Now are you listening?’

Anja Hopma

Part II

**A review of youth engagement in national education
and youth plans and policies**

Lynne Sergeant



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



International Institute
for Educational Planning

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7–9 rue Eugène Delacroix, 75116 Paris, France
info@iiep.unesco.org
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Foreword

Around the world, young people are excluded from the very conversations that determine their lives and their futures. These conversations often happen *around* young people and not *with* them. It is high time that we recognized the power of the youth voice, and the unique perspectives that young people have to offer on the matters that affect their lives. Encouraging and engaging youth in policy and decision-making is essential to adequately supporting youth. In the area of education, youth inclusion and participation are paramount and must be stressed, as education is the key that unlocks doors and cultivates human, social, and economic development. However, many young people are still not receiving the education needed to face the challenges of today's societies. The manner in which we approach education must therefore be changed and should adapt to the changing times. The structures and methods that were used to teach our parents no longer apply; new approaches and ideas are needed. To this end, the sector can draw on the vitality and freshness of the world's youth population.

A large proportion of today's youth are facing crises in education and employment. A major factor is skills mismatch in education. Asking young people to identify the skills that would benefit them most in the labour market would allow them to exercise autonomy and agency in their own education, and help them to assert themselves in the global workforce, as well as in society at large. Offering young people a seat at the table, and welcoming and encouraging their ideas, can help them to cultivate an entrepreneurial spirit, and to take an active interest in the world and in those with whom we share it.

Today, the World Programme Action for Youth (WPAY), adopted by UN Member States in 1995, continues to provide an overall policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of youth around the world. Education is one of the 15 priority areas highlighted in the programme and the WPAY seeks to develop the education system in ways that meet the needs and fulfil the rights of young people. Full and effective participation of youth in society and decision-making is another of the 15 priority areas. To provide inclusive global education and fulfil the goals of the WPAY, it is crucial to consult young people and listen closely to what they have to say.

With the release of this report, the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) is reaffirming the importance of not discounting young people's voices. Education should incorporate innovation and interactivity.

Youth have enormous strengths in these two areas. Not only do global youth deserve to be heard in matters of education and curricula planning, but education planning *needs* their input – not least because young people can bring out the excitement in learning.

It is crucial that we invest in young people and invest in their ideas for educational planning. The return on this investment will be manifold.

Ahmad Alhendawi
United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth

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Executive summary

As a central stakeholder in education, young people should be involved in educational planning. This publication focuses on the rationale for and obstacles to youth involvement, as well as the efforts of ministries of education to engage youth in their planning work.

It is based on discussions and recommendations that emerged from the high-level international policy forum on ‘Engaging youth in planning education for social transformation’ organized by the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) in Paris from 16 to 18 October 2012. This policy forum set out to explore the following broad themes: (i) youth engagement in planning education for conflict transformation and peace building; (ii) strengthening young people’s skills and opportunities for civic engagement within formal and non-formal education systems; and (iii) enhancing the relevance of education systems for young people in their transition to employment.

This publication draws on the exchanges during the pre-forum online debates, discussions among participants during the forum, and testimonials from practitioners and youth. It also draws on the findings of the three background papers (Rosso, Bardak, and Zelloth, 2012; Shaw *et al.*, 2012; Smith and Smith Ellison, 2012) presented during the forum, as well as the findings of a desk-based literature review. The findings of a review of national education and youth policies, strategies, and plans from 54 countries are also included (see *Part II*).

The terms ‘engagement’ and ‘participation’, both very broad concepts, lend themselves to a variety of approaches and many different activities within these approaches. For the purposes of this publication, these terms are used interchangeably. Both refer to activities where citizens are able to take part in decision-making (i.e. not merely influence decision-making) alongside those that govern them, so that the two groups produce public policy and programmes in collaboration. This publication also recognizes that such processes can be the result of either organic participation efforts or induced participation efforts. In other words, participation may be initiated by civil society organizations or by the government.

The scope of the concept ‘planning with and for youth in education’ used in this publication includes all of the processes and mechanisms through which educational planners work collaboratively with youth as stakeholders in education and incorporate their views into education plans.

There are several reasons to involve youth in policy planning:

- Involving young people in planning, in particular in the area of education, can bring significant added value to the decision-making process. Youth engagement in education policy and programme design generates political pressure on planners, provides planners with insights from users of the education system, and can offer planners innovative ideas on reforms. Research has also established that youth involvement can reassure decision-makers that they are planning the most appropriate actions to accomplish their goals effectively. Adults can in this sense feel encouraged and more confident when they work hand in hand with youth, which may in turn improve the quality of their work.
- Although the causality is not always clear, voluntary social activism, of which participation in policy planning is one example, appears to build civic skills and social consciousness in young people, as well as social, psychological, and academic skills and, not least, transferable skills for the world of work.
- Involving youth in research not only improves young people's critical thinking and analytical skills, but also allows them to develop strong advocacy statements to address challenges in education reform.
- Finally, a number of researchers argue that the international Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) upholds the engagement of children and youth as an essential human right.

However, there is also no shortage of challenges to youth engagement, the number and complexity of which help explain why progress towards mainstreaming youth participation has been slow. Among these are the following:

- Negative depictions of young people, which emphasize their volatility, immaturity, and 'natural' gravitation towards problematic behaviours such as delinquency or violence, damage the credibility of youth as participants in educational planning.
- Youth participation sympathizers have at times failed to take into account the diversity of youth and the effect this diversity can have on participation. Active youth participants are often of a high socio-economic status. Research has shown that, when governments engage with young people, these individuals do not always act in the interest of youth and society as a whole, but tend to advance their own individual agendas. As a result, rather than having a levelling effect on inequalities between social groups, participation can perpetuate disparities, or worse, exacerbate them. If involvement efforts fail to recruit a representative sample of youth delegates, a skewed defence of interests may result and cause youth participation to lose all legitimacy in the eyes of those categories of youth which are not represented.

- Many adults consider youth to lack the necessary technical skills to make a worthwhile contribution to educational planning. To adults, young people's ideas may seem unrealistic or overly focused on minor issues. Youth engagement is sometimes mistakenly dismissed on the grounds that the young people involved do not have altruistic motives, are poorly organized, and at times are unable to come to consensus. These judgements are short-sighted as such flaws exist in most, if not all, other interest groups in society and are not peculiar to youth.
- Common, well-intentioned engagement efforts may suffer from flawed design. In many youth conferences, the short time frames and restrictive protocols appear to adversely affect the ability of young people to articulate their opinions. As for youth councils, their status as advisors rather than empowered decision-makers, the tensions inside the council, and the appointed (rather than elected) status of delegates can weaken this participation mechanism.
- Youth participation may be considered too costly. Limited amounts of funding, either because of budgetary restraints or low interest in youth engagement, may underlie slow progress towards authentic youth participation.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach for involving young people in educational planning. Micro-level analysis is necessary to establish the barriers to participation in a given context and to develop specific solutions with which to experiment. Nevertheless, a number of recommendations, to be considered depending on the particular context, have been put forward:

- Raising awareness among educators and education planners about the importance of youth engagement remains necessary. Educators at school level should not be forgotten as their attitudes can promote or inhibit youth participation in planning at a higher decision-making level. It is equally important to inform youth of their right to participate. Project managers also need to invest time in meeting with youth participants before projects begin. This should allow adequate time for project managers to explain to youth in clear terms what is expected of them.
- As shown by the examples presented in this publication, for instance from Nigeria and South Africa, if youth are adequately trained and informed on the complexities of education reform, they can contribute to education planning. Recruiting facilitators or mentors to train young people on issues that concern them could also enhance the value of youth participation.
- The mechanisms of youth engagement need to be improved. Structural mechanisms for youth engagement should be preferred over ad hoc participation. Education planners should make efforts to ensure that a broad cross-section of youth from different backgrounds are included in participatory planning. As well as ensuring the representation of various socio-economic

and ethnic groups, it is also imperative to establish a gender balance in the groups of youth who take part in educational planning. Education planners may consider making use of new technologies to enter into exchanges and engage with youth; for example, using the internet to disseminate information on education plans and inviting young people to share their feedback. On the other hand, if online platforms are designed by decision-makers, then young people may be reluctant to use these tools to hold officials accountable.

Part I of the publication comprises an introduction and four chapters, as follows:

- *An Introduction* to the issues and key concepts referred to in the publication (youth, engagement, and educational planning).
- *Chapter 1* outlines the rationale for youth engagement in education, including the right to be heard, the benefits to young people themselves, and the potential contribution of youth as social development actors to community and societal well-being.
- *Chapter 2* considers the challenges of youth engagement in decision-making, including attitudes towards and perceptions about youth, and the enduring nature of tokenistic forms of participation.
- *Chapter 3* presents some strategies to encourage and support the process of youth engagement in educational planning through concrete examples referred to in the literature.
- *Chapter 4* offers a list of recommendations on how educational planners can adopt concrete measures to plan education with and for youth.

Part II presents an overview of ‘youth engagement’ as described in national education and youth policies and plans from 54 countries, and examines the extent to which young people have been engaged in national policy and planning processes, the different ways in which young people are engaged, and the challenges that countries face when including young people as partners in participatory processes.

The in-country examples provided in the review demonstrate that young people are currently engaged in their education at four different levels: within school and tertiary education governance, in shaping their own learning, in educational policy and planning processes, and in monitoring and evaluating their education.

Analysis of the policies and strategies identified three main challenges faced by governments to meaningfully including youth in their policy and planning processes: traditional hierarchies present in societies, a lack of institutional

commitment, and a lack of coordination among stakeholders (both government and youth themselves).

The review also highlights solutions proposed by governments to improve youth engagement in public decision-making. These include: institutionalizing mechanisms for youth engagement, strengthening intersectoral collaboration and networking opportunities, capacity development (for youth and decision-makers), establishing a more important role for youth at local level, knowledge generation – research by and for youth, providing information in user-friendly formats, engaging and mobilizing youth from the outset, and working with traditional and social media for outreach purposes.

Part I

‘Can you hear me? Now are you listening?’

Anja Hopma

Acknowledgements

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List of abbreviations

DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EAPRO	East Asia and Pacific Regional Office
ILO	International Labour Organization
SPW	Student Partnership Worldwide
UN GAOR	United Nations General Assembly Official Resolution
UNDP	United National Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YAG	Youth Advocacy Group (UN Global Education First Initiative)
YEN	Youth Employment Network

Introduction

Young men and women are not passive beneficiaries, but equal and effective partners. Their aspirations extend far beyond jobs; youth also want a seat at the table – a real voice in shaping the policies that shape their lives. We need to listen to and engage with young people Youth can determine whether this era moves toward greater peril or more positive change (Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General, 2012).

Youth is wasted on the young. Is that so? If we take a minute to contemplate what lies behind this epigram accredited to the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw we can see two key ideas. On the one hand, a nostalgic take on youth. Young people have a powerful energy and enthusiasm and the luxury of being carefree. On the other hand, it suggests that young people fail to use their potential or become aware of their potential too late. They may not realize the freedom they have, or they may lack the knowledge to achieve anything meaningful. If adults could relive their youth, they imagine themselves making better use of this period of their life.

This quote, primarily written to amuse an audience, conjures up a pervasive image of young people – that they are full of promise but their immaturity holds them back. Many adults adopt an undecided attitude towards young people, caught between admiration for the latter’s daring attitude and failure to believe in their abilities. Adults may rarely state their scepticism openly, but their bias may be subtly manifested, for example by failing to listen when young people are speaking at an event, or by taking a dismissive stance towards young people’s suggestions.

This subconscious and stereotyped perception transfers into the public arena. Decision-makers are often uncomfortable with the idea of involving youth in their work. Their resistance may be linked to legitimate concerns about the knowledge and ability of young people to discuss policy issues. Public policies designed to address youth issues have frequently presented young people as specific target groups to ‘deal with’ in isolation. Typically revolving around prevention of drug abuse, gang culture, and teenage pregnancy, such policies have been designed to ‘contain’ the problems ‘caused’ by youth and curtail ‘undesirable’ behaviours associated with young people.

While many decision-makers state their intentions to consult and engage with young people, the emphasis is usually on stakeholders working *for* youth rather than *with* youth. When dialogue and representation do occur, they can be tokenistic and lacking in institutional commitment. This publication argues that, in the case of educational planning, young people have unique skills and constitute

an underutilized and underestimated resource. Education is one area where young people remain passive, but could become drivers of reform in a system of which they are a part.

The global status of youth

In 1995, young people between the ages of 15 and 24 accounted for about 18 per cent of the world's population, or nearly 1.2 billion people, 87 per cent of whom lived in developing countries (United Nations, 2010). Today, these numbers have only increased. Many young people have limited access to education and training opportunities. According to UNESCO, 61 million children remain out of school, and in 123 low and lower middle-income countries, one in five young people have not even completed primary education (UNESCO, 2012).

For many young people who are in school, the quality and relevance of their education has fallen short. As argued by Murphy in the case of Arab Mediterranean countries, 'the current educational provision does little to prepare youth for the needs of an increasingly globalized, technology-driven economy' (Murphy, 2012: 9). General secondary education still suffers from the tendency of national education goals to focus on traditional higher education pathways rather than taking into account the conditions of local economies and employment imperatives. Questions of the relevance of education remain even at the level of higher education. Students in Asia were found to be lacking in the 'soft' interpersonal skills needed at work (IIEP-UNESCO, 2011a). According to UNESCO, one in eight young people aged 15–24 are now unemployed (UNESCO, 2012).

Defining concepts

What do we mean by 'youth'?

The United Nations defines youth as young people aged 15–24.¹ However, there is no internationally recognized definition of 'youth', and international organizations and countries differ in their definitions. The African Union extends the definition to include those aged between 15 and 35 years (Smith and Smith Ellison, 2012: 2.6). USAID extends the age range to 29 but notes that 'youth is a life stage, one that is not finite or linear' (USAID, 2012: 4).

1. The lower cut-off age of 15 years old represents the minimum age at which people should be legally allowed to work as per the ILO Convention 138 pertaining to Minimum Working Age (1973).

National definitions of youth are affected by such factors as the acquisition of civil, economic, and social rights and the average age at which people are expected to take on adult roles in the community. As argued by Smith and Smith Ellison:

In many parts of the world youth is not determined by age but by factors such as achieving economic independence, leaving the parental home, getting married and having children. Therefore, another way of understanding youth is as a transitional stage in life between childhood and adulthood (Smith and Smith Ellison, 2012: 2.7).

They go on to suggest that an age definition may be particularly unhelpful in certain contexts, especially where youth are forced – either by their family situation, gender, culture, social norms, or as a reaction to conflict or crisis – to adopt what are conventionally considered adult behaviours from an early age.

Defining youth in terms of chronological age is arguably even less appropriate in conflict situations than elsewhere. Youth are often thrust into adult roles earlier than would be the case in times of peace. They might, for example, find themselves heading households in the event of parental death and displacement. Conflict also causes difficulties for the sociocultural definition of youth, since the traditional markers of the transition into adulthood are often disrupted (Smith and Smith Ellison, 2012: 2.7).

Part II of this publication also reveals a broad definition of youth by age, from 12 to 40 years, and provides further examples of some of the social factors defining youth outlined above (see *Part II, Table 1.1*).

What do we mean by ‘engagement’ and ‘participation’?

There has been a wealth of literature on the concepts of citizen ‘engagement’ and ‘participation’ over the past four decades. In the 1960s, numerous essays were published on ways to implement participatory democracy, arguing that citizen engagement was necessary for policy-making to become more democratic, so as to ensure legitimacy (Arnstein, 1969). Arnstein used the term ‘citizen participation’, arguing that there were gradations of citizen participation in planning, ranging from little delegation of decision-making power to equal decision-making power between citizens and elected representatives.

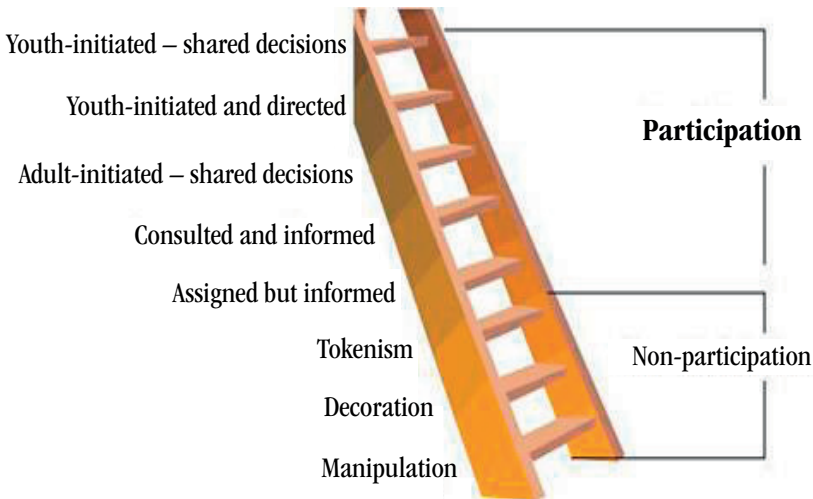
In the decades that followed, the difficulties of adopting a participatory approach came to the fore and interest in engagement fell, but it experienced a comeback in the 1990s and was even considered a sine qua non of successful development projects. However, a key rationale for participation had evolved. It was now argued that, beyond being democratic, participation was also cost-effective. Whether to generate more acceptance or ownership of a programme, improve service delivery, or increase accountability, there are many arguments to justify

stakeholder participation in the development of public policy (see Chambers, 1994; Cockburn, 2001; Irvin and Stansbury, 2004; World Bank, 2013.)

Arguments for stakeholder participation apply equally to youth participation in the policies which affect them. It is argued that, where they are beneficiaries of public policy and programmes, young people should be consulted during planning processes (Mokwena, 2006; Sommers, 2006; SPW DFID-CSO Youth Working Group, 2010).

Hart was one of the first to conceptualize youth participation and offer a typology of child and youth participation initiatives (see *Figure 1*). His participation ladder has eight rungs, ranging from weakest participation at the bottom to most progressive at the top. Three levels emerge from his classification: non-participation, assigned but informed, and consulted and informed. According to Hart, the top levels should be the objectives of any participatory process.

Figure 1. Hart's ladder of participation



Source: Adapted by USAID, n.d, based on Hart, 1992.

Different participatory planning mechanisms may be appropriate in different contexts. Cornwall and Coelho point to a diversity of formal participation mechanisms ranging from 'fleeting, one-off' events to 'regularized institutions with a more durable presence on the governance landscape' (Cornwall and Coelho, 2007: 1). Dryzek provides the following tools that can be used to enhance participative democracy: 'public inquiries, right-to-know legislation, citizen juries, policy dialogues, impact assessment with public comment,

regulatory negotiation, mediation and other kinds of third-party-facilitated conflict resolution' (Dryzek, 2000: 164). In its guidance for educational planners, IIEP suggests examples of practical participation mechanisms, which include: 'more or less formal information meetings, written or electronic communication, videoconferencing, formal consultation meetings, workshops, national conferences, etc.' (IIEP-UNESCO, 2010b: 10).

Several definitions of youth participation and engagement can be found in the literature, but a particularly useful, albeit broad, definition of their engagement in policy-making was provided by Checkoway, Allison, and Montoya:

Youth participation in public policy is a process of involving young people in the institutions and decisions that affect their lives. It includes efforts by young people to take initiatives and organize around policy issues that concern them, by adults to involve them in policy proceedings of public agencies, and by youth and adults to work together in intergenerational policy partnerships (Checkoway, Allison, and Montoya, 2005: 1150).

For the purposes of this publication, both 'youth participation' and 'youth engagement' refer to activities that offer opportunities for young people to participate in, as well as influence, decision-making.

What do we mean by 'educational planning'?

The core aims of planning are to 'guide investments towards national priority objectives, avoid duplication of efforts and, to the extent possible, reduce cyclical instability' (IIEP-UNESCO, 2010a: 9). Developed to provide a framework of action in the education sector, and now the main eligibility criterion for accessing the Global Partnership for Education Fund, educational plans are essential mechanisms for resource mobilization within ministries in charge of education (IIEP-UNESCO, 2010a). According to IIEP, educational planning is made up of five key steps.

Box 1. Five steps of the strategic educational planning process

- Step 1: Sector diagnosis: Where are we now?
- Step 2: Policy formulation: Where do we want to get to?
- Step 3: Selection of priority programmes and key objectives: How are we going to get there?
- Step 4: Design of the monitoring and evaluation framework: How do we know we have reached there?
- Step 5: Preparation of the financing framework: How much will it cost?

Source: IIEP-UNESCO, 2011b: 25.

In reality, educational planning is not a one-off activity but a continuous practice that should include and engage all government departments, partners, and stakeholders (including youth) at national and sub-national levels in a consultative and participatory process around a strategic vision. It is important when devising educational plans to take into account the rival interests and competing visions of different groups of stakeholders and develop objectives that satisfy all stakeholders.

Box 2. Stakeholders to involve in participatory educational planning

- Development partners, including aid agencies, international and (large) national NGOs;
- Civil society organizations and representatives, including religious, sociocultural, and economic representatives;
- Professional education associations, including teacher trade unions, parent/teacher associations, etc.;
- The private education sector;
- Decentralized levels of the education administration;
- Other ministries affecting or affected by the education plan: the Ministries of Finance and of Planning, but also the Ministries of Labour, Social Affairs, and Health;
- Political representatives;
- Student representatives;
- Representatives of the research community.

Source: IIEP-UNESCO, 2010b: 9.

Decentralized and school-based management are now practised in a growing number of countries; as such, participatory planning processes are increasingly initiated at regional and municipal levels, and could be further encouraged at school level.

Youth engagement in educational planning

As the main stakeholder in education, young people should be involved in planning education. Three important points need to be clarified in regard to the parameters set for this synthesis of the concept of 'educational planning with and for youth'.

First, this publication does not explore debates on personalized or individualized learning. Pupil-centred learning is relevant to student empowerment, and therefore research on the topic has sometimes looked at the classroom-level voice in conjunction with school-level or system-level voice. In this publication, however, questions related to classroom-level learner's voice

and participatory learning are not raised. Instead, the focus is restricted to issues that are 'larger' than the classroom – that is to say, system-level engagement in educational planning.

Second, the focus is exclusively on planning. In theory, this would take place only at the national level; but the reality is, of course, more complex. Currently, school-based management is practised in a growing number of systems and therefore, education plans can be set at the local level or at the level of the school. For the purposes of this publication, the authors assume that the reflections and recommendations made on youth participation are true for the level at which education plans are defined and developed, whether this takes place at the school, at a local education office, or at the Ministry of Education.

In practice, there are very few examples of collaborative policy and programme development in education which have involved youth. Participatory educational planning usually refers to negotiation of policies with stakeholders such as school directors, teachers, and parents. Many encouraging examples of youth involvement in decision-making appeared in both the literature review and the forum. The authors consider that, in most cases, the findings of research on these types of experiences with youth participation, for example on the challenges identified or the unexpected benefits, are likely to hold true for participatory planning in the education sector.

Third, this publication studies youth participation rather than child participation. Participatory planning in primary education is therefore not brought up in the discussions.

Although aware that questions and issues faced when promoting youth in engagement differ considerably between secondary schools and universities, the scope of this publication did not allow separate treatment of these contexts. Reflections and recommendations presented here are generally considered to apply to youth as a whole and therefore to both secondary and higher education establishments. The authors recognize that distinct contextualized analyses may however be necessary on certain topics.

Chapter 1

The rationale for youth engagement in educational planning

There is something fundamentally amiss about building and rebuilding an entire system without consulting at any point those it is ostensibly designed to serve (Cook-Sather, 2002: 3).

Although many encouraging examples of youth participation in decision-making emerged from the policy forum and literature review, there are relatively few examples of participatory education policy and programme development at national level that have included youth as a stakeholder. Although youth are the beneficiaries of education policies, occasions when these policies are discussed and negotiated with young people are few and far between (Kirk and Garrow, 2003; Levin, 2000; Whitehead and Clough, 2004). Much of the literature referred to in this publication is derived from research on school-, university-, or local government-based youth engagement efforts. Nevertheless, these examples provide concrete and successful illustrations of youth engagement in education which merit examination for scaling up at a national level.

1.1 The rights-based rationale for youth engagement

Participation in the public arena is a right of all young people, and over time the demands for inclusion of young people in policy-making have increased. A number of UN resolutions have been passed over the years, and while none of these are binding on governments, the right of youth to participate in public policy-making has gradually been integrated into international treaties.

In 1985, the Barcelona Statement acknowledged the usefulness of involving youth in planning. As part of the UN International Youth Year, the following extract (which was adopted by 608 young people, youth organizers, and senior governmental and non-governmental youth officials at a UNESCO World Congress on Youth held in Spain) explicitly called for greater involvement of youth in affairs that affect them:

The Congress recognized the profound importance of the direct participation of youth in shaping the future of humankind and the valuable contribution that youth can make to the implementation of a new international economic order based on equity and justice (UNESCO, 1985: 2).

In 1989, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by 193 states. Article 12 states that:

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (United Nations, 1989: 5)

In 2011, the UN General Assembly Resolution on Policies and Programmes involving Youth urged 'Member States to promote the full and effective participation of young people and youth-led organizations in relevant decision-making processes, including in developing, implementing and monitoring policies, programmes and activities at all times' (UN GAOR, 2011: 2).

As argued by Shaw *et al.*, such conventions advocate the participation of children and youth as an essential human right, a right for 'young people as young people – engaged and contributing members of society today, not merely citizens-in-the-making to receive such rights once they have completed their transition to adulthood' (Shaw *et al.*, 2012: 3.6).

1.2 The added value of youth to the decision-making process

As experts on topics which affect them, input from young people can improve, help orient, or re-orient policies so that they are more effective (UNICEF EAPRO, 2011).

Young people can bring a fresh perspective and enthusiasm to policies in education (Mokwena, 2006). It is often noted that they are less aware of obstacles, and as such are freer thinkers with good ideas less likely to be clouded out by the anxiety of failing, cynicism, or resignation that older adults may experience. Participation can enable young people to gain a better understanding of educational governance systems and obtain insights into how educational policy is formulated and how decisions are made at different levels. Dialogue and consultation can raise awareness about some of the realities of complex public policy processes and the questions educational planners face (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004).

Involving youth in educational planning processes could also reduce the dissatisfaction that many young people feel towards their education system. They may become sympathetic evaluators of the decisions that planners face (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004). Researchers in university governance have pointed out that dialogue between students and decision-makers builds a healthy organizational atmosphere and ensures all-important trust between the two groups (Menon, 2003).

Youth's lobbying efforts can also both motivate and apply pressure on policy-makers. Zeldin (2004) conducted a qualitative research programme to study youth engagement in eight youth organizations across the United States. The organizations selected had all engaged, for a minimum of one year, at least five youths in key governance roles, either as board members or in other governance structures such as programme design committees. Zeldin's research indicated that the presence of young people applied pressure on board members to increase the effectiveness of the work of the organization. Adults observed the commitment of youth to addressing issues and in return were motivated to deliver their best efforts.

Beyond the simple causal effect of pressure on decision-makers, Zeldin also established that involving youth in governance structures made adult board members feel that their decisions were more legitimate and reassured them that they were planning the most appropriate actions to accomplish their mission effectively. Employees of the organizations told researchers that they believed this assurance improved their work: through the process of working with youth, adults came to better understand their concerns, language, and perspectives, and as a result, felt that they were making better decisions as well as making them with increased confidence (Zeldin, 2004: 85).

Box 3 presents two examples of how decision-makers have involved youth in improving education decision-making.

Box 3. Examples of youth engagement in educational decision-making in Chile and Nigeria

In **Chile**, a youth movement that began in 2006 shows how secondary students are able to formulate concrete demands and ideas to improve the quality of an education system. A market-based privatized schooling system had created a socio-economic divide in access to quality education and young people rejected the inequalities present in the education system (Chovanec and Benitez, 2008).

Dubbed the Penguin Revolution because of the colour of the school uniforms, the movement began as a reaction against school bus fares and university entrance fees, and grew into a national movement demanding quality education for all. The Assembly of High School Students in Chile (ACES) mobilized secondary school pupils across the country to challenge the system. The students' primary demands included more state support, the end of decentralized administration of public schools, and the elimination of for-profit private voucher schools (Silva, 2008). Gradually other groups, including university students and teachers' unions, joined the wave of protests.

As public support grew, the government was forced to negotiate directly with the student leaders, and in June 2006 a public offer was made which met some of the students' minor demands, promised unspecified changes to the education laws, and set up a presidential

advisory council for education (Díaz Miranda, 2006). The ACES rejected this first offer, one of the main issues being dissatisfaction with the number of student representatives to be included in the new advisory council.

The Bachelet administration re-examined the case and eventually agreed to an array of policies to improve equality in the system, including promises to provide more free school lunches and payment of university entrance exam fees for students who qualified for financial aid (Kubal, 2009).

In **Nigeria**, in 2009 two bills were being drafted – the HIV/AIDS anti-discrimination bill and the discrimination of persons living with HIV/AIDS prohibition bill. Although the drafting committee for the bills included several civil society representatives, no young people were invited. Young people from one NGO, the Youth Advocates Group, paid close attention to the drafting process and on examination of the final draft judged that the legal protection for HIV-positive learners in schools was weak. As it stood, the document only prohibited schools from refusing to enrol students with HIV. However, people living with HIV face subtle day-to-day forms of discrimination as well as such direct discrimination.

The Group requested that the legislation specify that any such ‘differential treatment based on disclosed HIV status’ also be prohibited in schools. In a formal position paper published by the group, it stated that ‘no learner should be treated differently based on their HIV status within all school settings such as classroom, eating or dormitory facilities’ (McGee, Greenhalf, and Ashley, 2011: 88). Having personal knowledge of the Youth Advocates Group, the chairperson encouraged young people to attend the drafting on his own initiative.

The Group followed up its presentation of a position paper at the hearing with an active lobbying campaign. As a result of its efforts, after a year-long process its recommendation was eventually taken on board and included in the HIV and AIDS anti-discrimination bill passed by the House of Representatives (McGee, Greenhalf, and Ashley, 2011).

Youth involvement may also secure their buy-in to policies and increase their motivation to join efforts to change and improve the system. It has been demonstrated in the past that teachers’ efforts to change practices can be ‘resisted, subverted or rejected by students if the latter do not support or understand them’ (Levin, 2000: 158).

1.3 Youth engagement has a positive impact on youth

Shaw *et al.* documented many positive social and psychological effects of youth engagement, including lower rates of drop-out from the education system, higher academic achievement levels, a greater sense of career direction, and progressive reductions in alcohol consumption and criminal involvement (Shaw *et al.*, 2012: 3.12). They argue that youth engagement provides young people with the social consciousness needed to proactively apply their civic skills and advocate for change in society (Shaw *et al.*, 2012).

Commentators have suggested that participation boosts the confidence of young people in their own abilities, which in turn means that pupils will be more self-motivated in their learning (Yamashita, Davies, and Williams, 2010). It has been argued that youth will invest more effort in their own education if they feel they have greater power and more of a say in the education process (Larson, Walker, and Pearce, 2005; Tolman, 2003).

Contact and regular interaction with family, peers, and adult leaders of positive influence, provide social support which can buffer stress and build self-esteem and a sense of self-efficacy (Shaw *et al.*, 2012). Such character traits can also contribute towards peacebuilding. A report by the Academy for Education Development (AED, 2005) found that youth were more likely to attempt to resolve issues peacefully and avoid violent conflict if they had:

a stronger sense of self-esteem; more solid connections to their own community; a sense of empowerment to make decisions affecting their own future; adequate opportunities to get to know youth who are different than themselves; access to programs to improve leadership, communication, and basic conflict resolution skills; and avenues for job training and/or employment (AED, 2005: 3).

Lerner *et al.* argued that programmes characterized by 'positive and sustained adult-youth relationships, youth skill-building activities, and opportunities for youth participation in and leadership of community-based activities' (Lerner *et al.*, 2005: 12) could encourage the development of the 'six Cs': competence, confidence, character, connection, caring, and contribution (Shaw *et al.*, 2012: 3.10). This 'positive youth development' approach upholds a vision that considers youth as resources with intrinsic strengths to be identified, developed, and maximized.

Experience has shown that the majority of youth who have held responsibilities in schools or universities tend to be better equipped with leadership skills than those who have not. A 2002 study funded by the Council of Europe on student participation in university governance argued that engagement of young people led to a more active civil society. '[Students] need to learn how democracy works by experiencing that they can influence events and their own living conditions through participation' (Bleiklie in Plantan, 2002: 6). According to the 2009 Kenya National Human Development Report:

In Kenya, there seems to be a direct relationship between the youth who have undergone leadership exposure in schools and other institutions of learning, and the level of participation in national development. School provides an opportunity for the youth to practice leadership and school governance through student boards of prefects (UNDP, 2010: 65).

It is arguable that when civic skills and social consciousness are developed among young people, the foundations are laid for a future vibrant civil society.

1.4 Youth voices can increase the relevancy of education

Youth have the best understanding of the realities of their own lives (whether it is education, health, or the challenges associated with finding a decent job) and as such have much to offer policy-makers (YEN, 2007: 11).

In a survey conducted by the United Nations (2012) involving 13,500 young people, more than 50 per cent of participants appealed to policy-makers to review the content of curricula, at all levels of education, to include knowledge and skills needed in the labour market (IANYD, 2012). A similar finding was established by a survey conducted by McKinsey & Company, with a sample of 4,656 young people from nine countries. Only half of the young people surveyed stated they believed their post-secondary education had improved their chances of securing employment (Mourshed, Farrell, and Barton, 2012).

Frustration with the education system is perhaps most acute when young people experience unemployment, as they often immediately associate this with their past education (ACEVO, 2012; IANYD, 2012; Mourshed, Farrell, and Barton, 2012). A World Bank survey carried out with youth from Turkey on the transition from school to work revealed that although youth identified weak economic growth and lack of information systems as key causes of their prolonged unemployment, they also blamed their schooling, accusing the education system of not producing a skilled labour force (World Bank, 2008).

Rosso, Bardak, and Zelloth also point to surveys conducted in EU Member States which show that young people believe that the education system does not adequately equip them with the skills needed in the workplace. This creates a gap between education and 'real life' which often leads to feelings of disillusionment. Those who fail to make a successful transition feel particularly disempowered (Rosso, Bardak, and Zelloth, 2012: 4.21).

Analysts also argue that a key factor exacerbating the sense of grievance young unemployed people feel is that they were encouraged to 'over-invest' in their education (Campante and Chor, 2012; Huntington, 1968).

Interpersonal, communication, teamwork, and negotiation skills, as well as analytical skills and problem solving, are all important for young people in their life outside school. There is a growing consensus that these 'transferable skills' are also a key determinant of the employability of young people, and that they be can be strengthened through youth engagement activities.

According to a study commissioned by the European Youth Forum, which included surveys and interviews conducted with employers, the three most desirable skills of employees are all so-called transferable skills: communication skills, organizational skills, and decision-making skills. Information collected from youth involved in youth organizations found that the key skills they developed through their activities were also transferable skills (Souto-Otero *et al.*, 2013). Participation can help strengthen young people's ability to communicate effectively, engage in dialogue, work collaboratively, and acquire the critical thinking skills necessary to analyse and resolve conflicts.

Tolman argued that young people can be central to the entire process of educational reform, 'the what, how, who, when, and where of education' (Tolman, 2003: 80). He points to an example in Scotland in which young people were asked by researchers which skills they most frequently used and found most valuable. This generated 'a list of core skills substantially different from those they are normally taught in schools, which could be used as the basis for life skills curriculum development' (Tolman, 2003: 80).

Box 4. Youth advocacy at international level

The Youth Advocacy Group (YAG) was created to support the UN Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative (GEFI). This group, composed of 18 young people from around the world, provides expertise on youth education and the education priorities of young people, facilitates youth consultations, and encourages the mobilization of young people in education issues. One of the most high profile of the group's activities was the UN Youth Takeover in July 2013 on the occasion of Malala Day during which world leaders were presented with 'The Youth Resolution: The Education we Want' which outlined youth's calls to world leaders to address the education emergency.

Source: www.globaleducationfirst.org/youthadvocacygroup.html

1.5 Youth can add value as researchers

The literature reviewed suggests that young people themselves can make an effective contribution to conducting education research. Engaging youth in participatory research or survey work on issues that directly affect their lives is especially relevant when these issues relate to the transition to the world of work (Rosso, Bardak, and Zelloth, 2012). Young researchers who are daily users of the education system often have access to qualitative information that academic researchers may miss or be unable to acquire. Staff from Save the Children found that including a gender-balanced group of young researchers in their work in Nepal, in partnership with the Ministry of Youth, enabled them to collect richer information. When interviews and focus groups are led by young

people, participants are able to share information more openly with their peers (SPW/DFID-CSO Youth Working Group, 2010). This was also a key finding of an evaluation of innovative research by UNICEF on quality of education that involved young people as researchers. UNICEF found that participatory research improved youth engagement in planning because the process allowed young people to develop strong advocacy statements and provide informed suggestions to address educational challenges (UNICEF, 2011a).

It would appear, therefore, that the benefits of using youth as researchers are two-fold, improving both the quality of the research and, hopefully, ultimately the relevance of the policy, as well as the skills of young people themselves.

Box 5. The benefits of youth involvement in research

To empower children and young people and ensure their meaningful participation, skills are required. One mechanism to develop these skills is through the involvement of young people in research and evaluation activities. In participatory action research, scholars and practitioners engage youth as partners in the design and implementation of research on issues that affect their lives (Fox *et al.*, 2010). In identifying and defining problems, common techniques are for young people to conduct surveys and interviews of their peers, and make public presentations of their findings. Often, strategies for involving young people in participatory research and evaluation call for training in, and facilitation of, methods that might be deemed more inclusive than traditional research design: for instance, the use of creative multimedia and innovative methods for capturing and generating data. Outside the immediate training, such programmes equip young people to become agents of change (Sharpe, 2009). These methods can be used alongside other strategies such as ethnography: for example, 'day in the life' studies based on listening, and on seeing the issues from young people's perspectives to understand their social and emotional worlds in their terms (Young Foundation, 2009).

Source: Shaw *et al.*, 2012: 3.17.

Similar initiatives are underway involving youth in education-related data collection. In Uganda, for example, a UNICEF-led initiative entitled eduTrac involves pupils in data collection using mobile phones regarding issues such as teacher absenteeism or hygienic facilities in schools.²

2. For more information see: www.rapidsms.org/projects/edutrac/

Chapter 2

Challenges to youth engagement in educational planning

Despite consistent advocacy for a featured youth role in programming, many youth programs still do not effectively demonstrate this. Indeed, there are signs that some agencies developing programs for youth focus on what they are prepared to provide rather than what youth need or want most. ... The leap towards positioning youth much more prominently as program designers and participants is a leap that many programs have evidently not yet made (Sommers, 2006: 25).

This chapter examines some of the barriers to youth engagement in the public arena. Acknowledging these obstacles and seeking to understand why youth engagement experiences have failed is a first step towards developing more effective alternatives. Some of the key challenges highlighted in this chapter include perceptions of youth, the capacity of youth to engage, tokenistic and unrepresentative engagement, and poor mechanisms of engagement.

2.1 Perceptions of youth

Although now less widespread than it once was (Erikson, 1968; Freud, 1969; Hall, 1904), a prevailing 'storm and stress' view of youth can undermine the appeal of youth engagement. A negative depiction of young people, which emphasizes their volatility, immaturity, and 'natural' gravitation towards problematic behaviours such as delinquency or violence, damages the credibility of youth. This pejorative view of youth portrays them as being unpredictable and impulsive – a generation that needs to be contained and controlled. One ministerial participant at the IIEP policy forum admitted that a negative image of young people is common in his country:

Stakeholders view them as a problem rather than partners in coming up with solutions. We have a negative perception about the youth, so much so that they are believed to be interested only in money but not working.

Researchers have observed that teachers fail to see the importance of involving students in decision-making since they feel, more often than not, that their requests are either unrealistic, too demanding, or focus on minor issues. They refer to 'chips and toilets' issues to describe young people's priority areas of recommendations (Whitty and Wisby, 2007). In turn, if students sense prejudice

on the part of adults – if they feel they are perceived by adults as apathetic or incapable of offering useful ideas – they may believe these preconceptions or be discouraged from voicing their opinions (Checkoway, Allison, and Montoya, 2005). It may be believed that so-called ‘youth insights’ are not to be trusted because, oblivious to the very real limitations, young people’s ideas quickly become impractical (Cook-Sather, 2002). This may be particularly true in societies where social hierarchies and norms can be discriminatory against young people (Amarasuriya, Gündüz, and Mayer, 2009; UNICEF EAPRO, 2011).

A feeling of marginalization from decision-making is often experienced by young people. A study undertaken by UNICEF on adolescent and youth perspectives on educational quality found several examples of marginalization of youth from decision-making (UNICEF, 2011a: 153–154). One young person in Kosovo, for example, explained that the curriculum did not adequately prepare students for the final secondary school exam. When she and her fellow students had attempted to explain this to educators, their opinions were categorically rejected.

Cultural norms may mean that young people are reluctant to speak out and adults even less likely to listen, especially when it involves discussion on sensitive topics. In addition, negative attitudes of family members and the community can discourage or prevent youth participation in decision-making processes.

While underestimating young people is clearly a bad policy, an equally misguided approach is to *overestimate* them. Doing so can end in frustration and disillusionment. For instance, some adults may assume that young people become involved in social activism for noble and selfless reasons. Adults can expect youth to be involved for purely altruistic reasons, and can be ‘disappointed with young people’s reasons for participating (e.g. because other friends are on the youth council)’ (USAID, 2009: 8). Adults also sometimes imagine that young people can reach consensus on opinions relatively easily and present ‘youth’s ideas’ as a collective whole. In reality, there is often little coherence in youth recommendations. For example, members of the European Steering Committee reported that to produce a document of conclusions and recommendations following a series of European youth conferences in 2010, they needed to hold several meetings to ‘iron out’ contradictions from the texts that emerged from the meetings (Fernandez *et al.*, 2011: 29). However, ruling out youth participation on these grounds would be short-sighted, as such flaws and challenges exist in most, if not all, other interest groups in society and are not peculiar to youth.

2.2 Tokenistic and unrepresentative engagement

Many young people are keen to get involved in local matters but are highly sceptical of the tokenism and rhetoric that wrap around many of the ways that are currently on offer to them (Matthews and Limb, 2003: 175).

According to Smith and Smith Ellison 'the literature on youth engagement is littered with criticisms of superficial and tokenistic approaches' (Smith and Smith Ellison, 2012: 2.16). IIEP's review of policies and strategies, in *Part II* of this publication, also contains numerous examples of governments providing assurances that their development was inclusive, but presenting little information on how the participatory process had engaged with youth. In some cases, deliberations and decisions regarding policy decisions may already have taken place with youth engaged merely as a simple public relations tool or as a formality to achieve other objectives such as donor commitment (Mokwena, 2006). It is arguable that such 'PR participation' still underlies many tokenistic participation efforts and the opinions of young people are merely shaped to adhere to policies (Anderson, 1998). Such ulterior motives are problematic as the consequent 'smokescreen participation' not only distracts from the original goal of participation, but can further disillusion young people from participatory processes. As a result of disappointments in their engagement as a young person, individuals can then become disengaged citizens (Head, 2011; Menon, 2003).

Unrepresentative groups of youth delegates are also a common problem. Youth consultations are often drawn from urban populations and the views represented are dominated by educated and privileged urbanized youth. Studies have shown that active youth participants are often of a high socio-economic status (Cockburn, 2001; Kauffman, 1997; Kirk and Garrow, 2003; Sommers, 2006; Whitty and Whisby, 2007) and could be described as 'elite participants' – that is, pupils who are already articulate and well connected. Pupils who are geographically isolated or who have low literacy skills are much less likely to present themselves for election as representatives (USAID, 2009). The voices of girls, rural populations, out-of-school youth, unemployed youth, migrants, and marginalized populations (both urban and rural), as well as young persons with disabilities, frequently go unheard.

If participation mechanisms fail to recruit a representative sample of youth delegates, a skewed defence of interests is likely to surface among the dominant group, which may neglect or fail to take into account the realities of all. Youth may then doubt the delegates' ability to defend their interests. As one ministerial participant at the IIEP policy forum put it, engagement efforts in their country commonly produce an 'undesirable group of recycled youth representatives

whose main motives and participation are self-fulfilling rather than in the general interest of the youth’.

Box 6. A youth’s view on the establishment of the National Youth Council in Kenya

I’ve been going through the National Youth Council draft concept paper and I’m happy to say that most of what youth have, for a long time, been yearning for is well covered. As such, we can say that the initial hurdle of collecting views from different areas, analysing, and collating them to produce an all-encompassing draft has been overcome. But there lies ahead the challenge of popularizing the draft, taking it directly to young people, obtaining their feedback/input, and engaging them in any further activities before the draft is finally enacted into (government) policy. This will create a sense of ownership and belonging among the youth in that they will feel that this is something they took part in, contributed to in one way or the other and, importantly, wasn’t imposed on them.

Why am I saying this? You’ll all agree with me (i.e. members of this forum), that apart from those of us who managed to read and get a copy of the draft N.Y. paper and draft Action Plan Framework when it was first published in November last year, only a small percentage of Kenya’s 9 million young people are aware of the existence or the formulation of such a policy. Though there have been other avenues (i.e. discussion forums) where youth have taken part in this process, this has been limited to the cities of Nairobi and Mombasa where the national consultative forum to prepare an elaborate action plan was recently concluded. This leaves out youth in other parts of the country who may feel, once the policy is enacted, that this was just an elitist engagement for which their input wasn’t required and which, in the long run, will be of no benefit to them.

Source: UNDP, 2010: 8.

The lack of disaggregated data in many countries, both on youth organizations and on young people themselves, increases the likelihood of youth representation being either tokenistic or unrepresentative. As noted by Rosso, Bardak, and Zelloth:

There are dozens of different sub-groups, each with very different starting conditions and facing very different transition problems ... Differences of gender, education, family background, and wealth, and the places where young people live (in cities or rural environments, in places with many or few employment opportunities) all create different conditions for different youth groups, which need to be considered in planning and implementing policies (Rosso, Bardak, and Zelloth, 2012: 4.22).

2.3 Capacity of youth to engage

Advocates of youth engagement sometimes gloss over the fact that young people’s technical knowledge may be limited. Arguing that young people are infinitely

inspired and innovative can create an artificial positive stereotype of youth. Excessively optimistic views of youth-driven programming are equally as simplistic as negative stereotypes (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2011). As Cockburn observed in her report on a conference on children in conflict, 'asking youth to make decisions before they understand the issue sacrifices the important process dimension of participation and may lead to token participation' (Cockburn, 2001: 22).

Young people have themselves asserted that an overreliance on youth can be just as inappropriate as underestimating their abilities. Showing admiration for everything that young people share at a conference, or never challenging their ideas, regardless of the content of what they are saying, can be patronizing and condescending. This attitude does not take the youth voice seriously (Matthews and Limb, 2003).

A lack of understanding of the subject is obviously a serious constraint to meaningful participation. Youth representatives are often invited to participate in policy dialogue without the guidance, training, or necessary information to make an effective contribution. As a result, there is a risk of simply 'co-opting' them into certain statements and conclusions, all drafted by adults.

It has been rightly pointed out, for example, that children are to some extent unable to compare the education system which they receive with alternatives. Unaware how curriculum or pedagogy methods have evolved over time, young people cannot judge whether current approaches are better or worse than previous iterations (Rudduck and Flutter, 2000). In addition, some topics, such as the question of planning education for future employment, are very complex and grappled with even by expert economists. Brainstorming with young people for solutions to unemployment may begin as a flattering exercise, but can become discouraging and seen as a waste of time by young people as they realize the complexity of the interrelations between the factors which cause unemployment.

As Matthews and Limb explain: 'There is a fine line between making young people's involvement central and overreaching the expertise and capability of the group' (Matthews and Limb, 2003: 180).

2.4 Inadequate structures of engagement

Advocating for a youth-sensitive approach to educational planning, which elicits the voice of young people, is not a new concept. However, authentic youth participation mechanisms have yet to become a widespread feature in the education sector (Kirk and Garrow, 2003; Levin, 2000; Tolman, 2003).

Youth conferences

Youth conferences are often held as a means to give young people an opportunity to express themselves and to gather their opinions on a specific matter. However, the short timeframe of such conferences can be a challenge and a barrier to meaningful youth engagement. As Cockburn describes: ‘informed decision-making takes time to explore options and discuss the issue. Even more time is required if the young people involved in this decision have not had a great deal of practice’ (Cockburn, 2001: 22).

A second challenge is that often such events are planned in advance, leaving little room for dynamic exchanges. In tightly controlled events, youth participation is often reduced to short testimonials intended to inspire adults into action.

Conferences are designed to receive authorized input in a structured and very formal process. Thus the speakers are chosen and the program is defined well before delegates arrive. The draft report or communiqué, to save time in the meeting, will have been outlined and some content may already be agreed on. In order to consult their colleagues and prepare their positions, government representatives need to know roughly what the outcome document will include even before they arrive. ... Some categories of participants may not be allowed to speak at certain sessions, or may only be allowed to give a brief statement. Governments generally like to know what will be discussed and who will speak so that they can prepare their own speeches and send the appropriate representatives (Cockburn, 2001: 23).

Nevertheless, when specific roles and spaces are provided for youth to share their opinions, conferences can empower young people. Several young participants who attended the IIEP policy forum stated that the event was an opportunity to voice their opinions in a way that would not be possible in their home country. They appreciated the opportunity to interact with ministers and high-level actors. As one participant stated: ‘My favourite part was during the group discussions ... we got chances to say what is in our hearts and present it to different peoples and our ministers as well.’

Pupil/student and youth councils

Another common means of including youth in planning is through pupil/student councils within education institutions or youth councils at a local, national, or international level. USAID provided a helpful breakdown of the different types of youth councils, including issue specific, group specific, community specific, youth driven or state driven, advising or advocacy, youth centres or society centred and international intermediary organizations (USAID, 2009). Kehler Siebert and Seel highlighted a number of challenges that national youth councils face which may

result in failure to act as a serious interlocutor with government, including: lack of funding, changes in government, competing or rival organizations within the same country, and government appointed rather than elected of members (Kehler Siebert and Seel, 2006).

Many national youth councils have little more than an advisory role rather than being a partner in decision-making processes. If the recommendations produced by a council are consistently not taken into account, young people may feel their involvement in council meetings is futile. Kehler Siebert and Seel argued that few youth councils were as vocal or consulted as regularly as they would have liked (Kehler Siebert and Seel, 2006). A youth council representative at the IIEP policy forum echoed this statement, voicing frustration that her opinions and those of her colleagues were often ignored.

2.5 Inadequate funding for engagement

Another reason why youth participation may fail to materialize or be effective is because it is considered too costly. When funding is available, it may be linked to an individual donor agenda. Those working in the education system regularly lack time, resources, and capacity to engage young people in educational reform (Ginwright, Noguera, and Cammarota, 2006). It is true that a commitment to youth voice requires a long-term, potentially costly, investment in material and human resources. However, this remains a question of political will. Zeldin cites one board member who thought that including youth in governance meetings was an unacceptable waste of time and would be a 'poor return on management time' (Zeldin, 2004: 84). Advocates of youth participation argue that the approach should be seen as cost-effective. (Mokwena, 2006; SPW/DFID-CSO Youth Working Group, 2010). DFID points to 'positive financial repercussions' of young people's involvement in decision-making, given that policies may be 'more readily accepted or practical' (SPW/DFID-CSO Youth Working Group, 2010: 13).

These examples shed some light on the numerous challenges facing meaningful youth engagement. These observations, however, can help decision-makers improve their engagement mechanisms. The following chapter provides suggestions as to how this could be done.

Chapter 3

Strategies to support youth engagement in educational planning

This chapter provides suggestions from the literature on how to support an enabling environment for planning education with youth, as well as ways for educational planners to ensure that their work is more relevant to youth needs. The obstacles to youth engagement noted in the previous chapter are taken into account, and it is hoped that the ideas offered here will help to mitigate these obstacles.

3.1 Awareness-raising

Educating young people about their rights and how to exercise these rights is a critical part of supporting them to engage with policy issues. By strengthening their knowledge, awareness-raising activities can build confidence among young people and encourage them to take action (McGee, Greenhalf, and Ashley, 2011: 92–93).

As a first step there is a need to convince the relevant authorities of the benefits of youth engagement in education planning processes, both from a rights-based and a value-added perspective. Without this initial awareness-raising process, an inclusive approach towards youth could face resistance and fail to materialize (Menon, 2003). This feeling was echoed by policy forum participants, particularly practitioners in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), who reported that information campaigns on youth engagement remained a priority in their work.

Educational planners at the ministry level are primary actors to target in awareness-raising. However, teachers and school directors who ‘promote – or inhibit – student participation through their attitudes and the resources they use to facilitate the information and participation processes’ (Planas *et al.*, 2011: 11) also need to be included in these awareness-raising efforts. Youth also need to be aware of their rights of participation and the value of their contribution.

There is also a need to generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and value of youth engagement among families and communities. The attitudes of community elders, cultural expectations, and social norms can generate additional barriers to youth participation in dialogue on decision-making.

Equally important is the need to inform youth that meaningful engagement requires a long-term commitment. In their recommendations, both DFID and UNICEF stated that in future they would advise project managers to invest time in meeting with youth participants before projects begin. This would allow project managers to explain to youth in clear terms what is expected of them and to assess their level of motivation (SPW/DFID-CSO Youth Working Group, 2010; UNICEF, 2011a). The authors of the UNICEF report suggested conducting face-to-face interviews with team members to 'weed out applicants who are not truly committed' (UNICEF, 2011a: 28).

Information campaigns on the right to participate could include educating young people on the realities of participation processes. This might help to avoid frustrations that can sometimes lead to young people dropping out of participation mechanisms.

3.2 Capacity development

Education systems often fail to prepare young people adequately to participate in decision-making. They do not develop the necessary analytical skills for critical thinking or problem solving through participatory, active learning. In some cases young people are given the opportunity to participate in decision-making without ensuring that they receive adequate training or access to the appropriate information that would enable them to make informed decisions (SPW/DFID-CSO, 2010).

Governments are sometimes unprepared to work with youth on a day-to-day basis, with structures ill-adapted to accommodate inexperienced youth actors. They may need to learn more about the importance of preparing and training young people before the latter can meaningfully join in the planning processes and policy discussions.

For example, when the Youth Council of the French-speaking community in Belgium prepares position papers, the council staff provide youth with technical knowledge on certain issues to allow them to articulate an informed opinion. Professionals, including social workers, trade unionists, or lawyers, for example, are regularly asked to intervene in debate evenings or other venues to answer questions from young people (J. Wacquez, personal communication, March 2013).

Young people may also require induction into the way the planning process works, as well as on the content of reforms they are being asked to consider. This may include understanding youth education issues and their political context, and information on how education legislation is passed, how policies are designed and implemented, and how to have an impact on these processes. Youth need to be

aware of the expectations of institutional stakeholders, so that they can prepare and deliver their message more effectively. Training can focus on research skills or transferable skills, such as public speaking and presentation practice, policy analysis, and communicating in written formats used by policy-makers.

Civic education can help provide youth with the positive reflexes to become more active in educational planning (Shaw *et al.*, 2012). There is a growing consensus on the need to teach civic knowledge (i.e. rules of democracy and rights) in schools. There is also increasing recognition that civic education should transcend the curriculum; it should introduce a school culture that encourages pupil involvement in decision-making (Shaw *et al.*, 2012). Greater involvement in planning develops civic skills among youth and increases the likelihood of a growing interest in planning (Shaw *et al.*, 2012). As demonstrated above, these civic skills are also transferable skills valued by employers and are essential for any form of conflict resolution.

Peer education can also provide a valuable mechanism for youth capacity development. Many practitioners present at the IIEP policy forum considered this essential. In South Africa, Equal Education, a youth NGO working on education activism, encourages youth to take the lead in campaigning for improved quality and equality in the South African education system. In his presentation at the IIEP policy forum, the General Secretary of Equal Education, Brad Brockman, explained that youth should be provided with opportunities for civic engagement in order to develop the necessary skills to address injustices in the education system. Equal Education organizes weekly group meetings in schools across the country, as well as annual summer camps where high school students are taught how to lead campaigns to defend their rights. Equal Education advocates for young people to play an active role in educational policy-making and follows closely national education legislation and policies, participating as appropriate in public consultation processes (B. Brockman, personal communication, May 2013).

Capacity development for planners should begin with discussions on how to work realistically with youth at different points in the planning cycle. These could start by identifying specific entry points for young people's active engagement (e.g. through data gathering, sector analysis, or monitoring and evaluation activities). This would require reviewing the technical aspects of education sector planning with ministries to ensure they address youth needs and concerns and have actively engaged young people in the process. Some strategies to support this process might include producing youth-friendly guidance on how young people can work with policy-makers on some technical components of education sector planning, as well as working with planners and policy-makers on how and when to engage youth. A key finding of IIEP's review of policies and strategies was the lack

of data and locally contextualized research on the nature, extent, and magnitude of problems that young people face (see *Part II*). Therefore, one approach could support planners to review education management information system (EMIS) and datasets to analyse existing data from a youth perspective and possibly include new indicators and capture new data that relate to youth issues.

3.3 Improving mechanisms for engagement

Both traditional and innovative participatory mechanisms can be explored for the purposes of youth engagement. When UNICEF invited young people to work on a research project in education, it used a variety of means to recruit young researchers, including newspapers, radio, and school and university networks (UNICEF, 2011a).

Many participants at the IIEP policy forum highlighted the potential of new media to reach out to youth, disseminate information, and invite young people to share feedback. Smith and Smith Ellison point to examples of

using the Internet to circulate blogs and upload videos to express their political views, to the use of Twitter and email to put their questions to politicians. New media allows participants to communicate on an equal basis and raise issues that are of relevance to their lives. By putting youth in direct contact with politicians, they can also act as an important mechanism of accountability in support of political transformation (Smith and Smith Ellison, 2012: 2.18).

However, the importance of traditional media should not be overlooked. In many countries a technology gap still exists, which implies that youth engaged online may not be representative of all young people (Livingstone, Couldry, and Markham, 2007). Furthermore, it is likely that if decision-makers were to attempt to generate youth engagement through new technologies in a top-down manner, such engagement would become less appealing for youth. Young people may be more likely to use the internet and social networking to *lobby* a ministry on issues such as equal access to education (e.g. through starting a petition online), than participate in a debate on equal access to education on a Facebook page set up *by* a ministry. Advocates of online youth engagement risk becoming caught in between supposedly promoting autonomous movements for change and in fact managing public opinion (Rheingold, 2008).

Box 7. Use of mass media by youth in Somalia

The 2012 Somalia *Human Development Report* provided an interesting case study on the use of mass media by young people.

While elders remain the traditional voice of Somali leadership, Somali youth are fast becoming leaders in society, using youth groups to voice the concerns of their generation. Youth groups, especially at the local level, are promoting greater community awareness about female genital mutilation, disarmament, and HIV/AIDS.

Since Somalia retains a strong oral culture where the importance of mass media as a conduit of the spoken word is fundamental, UNICEF supports youth broadcasting initiatives. UNICEF works with 20 youth groups around the country, providing training to young people in radio and video production. The programme focuses on key issues of concern to young people, such as access to basic health services, the threat of malaria, preserving and properly using limited water resources, and the risk of HIV/AIDS.

Youth groups conduct ongoing training and day-to-day management of production with the support of producers from local media. Once produced, video and radio programmes are broadcast and distributed at regular intervals.

Source: UNDP, 2012: 88.

Many participants in the IIEP policy forum emphasized structural mechanisms for youth engagement as a preferred mechanism over ad-hoc participation and stressed that these mechanisms should be 'safe places' where young people as well as adults can speak freely. Governments often look to youth organizations to provide them with 'panels' of young people. In some contexts this could create the 'elite' phenomenon mentioned previously, but in others this may be the most appropriate means to locate young people from isolated areas or from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Appropriate time should be set aside to reflect carefully on how to create a wide membership in such organizations and on how to ensure that representation reflects the diversity of socio-economic groups of young people (Cockburn, 2001; SPW/DFID-CSO Youth Working Group, 2010). UNICEF staff also concluded that elite participation could be avoided by seeking out organizations beyond the larger national youth NGOs. They recommend to 'partner with smaller and more localized and regional youth organizations and centres ... [to] ensure greater diversity of youth researcher involvement and better representation of minority, ethnic and marginalized populations' (UNICEF, 2011a: 28).

The SPW/DFID-CSO Youth Working Group points to a variety of different youth organizations for inclusion in a mapping of the youth sector: political youth organizations, student associations, civil society organizations, religious organizations, youth councils, and virtual online forums (SPW/DFID-CSO Youth Working Group, 2010: 22). It is also essential to ensure a gender balance in

any youth groups that take part in participatory processes. Issues in the education system affect girls and boys differently and a female voice is vital to improving education for all young people. However, girls are often less inclined to become involved in participatory planning organized in the education system (Kirk and Garrow, 2003). This should be taken into account when preparing youth participation strategies.

Box 8. Authentic youth consultation: The case of the Youth Council of the French-speaking community in Belgium

In Belgium, the Youth Council of the French-speaking community has been lauded for its independence, stability, and secure finances. Staff from the council believes its ‘credibility and acceptance by governance actors are gradually growing’. Since 2008, when the Youth Council took its current form, an increasing number of members of parliament have solicited the council for its opinion on various matters. In addition, journalists increasingly request the council to comment on youth-related topics. Aware that members of the assembly, composed of 50 elected young people*, were not representative of all young people in Belgium, the council developed targeted outreach mechanisms to gather the opinions of youth groups on specific topics. Council staff visit youth centres and secondary schools, and organize workshops to discuss issues directly with youth.

* Members of this assembly, aged 16–30 and who are re-elected via the council’s website every two years, currently include representatives from youth organizations (30), representatives from student associations (15), and youth who are engaged in ‘collective actions’ (5) (Conseil de la Jeunesse web page: www.conseildelajeunesse.be/qui-sommes-nous/).

Source: J. Wacquez, personal communication, March 2013..

IIEP’s review of youth, policies, and strategies provides further examples of different mechanisms used by countries to engage youth in the formulation of their policies and strategies.

School-level councils and clubs are also important mechanisms that should be promoted. School councils or peace clubs can promote dialogue and understanding between pupils, teachers, parents, and representatives of local government. They can provide young people with the opportunity to explore democratic structures, reflect on projects for civic engagement, and encourage youth representation.

For youth engagement mechanisms to be effective they must be formally integrated into the official decision-making processes, whether at national, local, or institutional level, and receive adequate funding to operate.

Chapter 4

Recommendations

This publication argues that youth can play a critical role in helping to plan an education system for the 21st century. By engaging youth and encouraging participation, including through lobbying efforts, young people's insights and fresh perspectives can improve the quality of education research, programmes, and policies. In addition, engaging young people in a participatory approach to educational planning helps provide the social, psychological, civic, and transferable skills relevant to preparing young people for active citizenship. Communication, leadership, team-building, creative, analytical, and negotiation skills also help prepare young people for their transition to the world of work, to become active agents for community and civic engagement, and to contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

The following recommendations on planning education with and for youth are centred on the steps of the planning process outlined in *Box 1* (see p. 24) and summarize the main arguments made throughout this study.

4.1 Sector diagnosis

Educational planners should consider appropriate entry points for involving young in education research. Youth insights could significantly improve the quality and relevance of the research. This could include, for example, undertaking qualitative research that broadens baseline data on the youth situation and improves the analysis of which skills should be taught in school to improve a young person's opportunities outside school. Engaging young people can also help ensure that research and data are context specific.

Educational planners should consider the need to improve disaggregated data collection, correlation, and consolidation. Involving youth in data collection and analysis could provide access to potentially untapped and unexplored data sources and enrich the available datasets. This could include reviewing existing indicators within the EMIS and other datasets to analyse existing data from a youth perspective and examine the possible inclusion of new indicators, for example to monitor gender balance and numbers of marginalized youth on school councils or in national youth organizations. In hard-to-reach areas the increasing use of mobile phone technology in data collection may be particularly useful in this regard.

4.2 Policy formulation

Educational planners should make efforts to ensure that a diverse range of youth and youth voices (different socio-economic and ethnic groups, appropriate gender balance) are included in participatory mechanisms. Approaches such as mapping existing organizations in the youth sector and conducting surveys on youth opinion could help ensure that youth delegates are representative. Mechanisms to ensure that hard-to-reach youth are included in discussions should be explored. Internet, new media, and traditional media could all be used to disseminate information on proposed educational reforms and invite young people to share their feedback.

Both educational planners, and young people themselves, need to recognize that meaningful input into policy formulation may require capacity development for both planners and youth. Educational planners will need to provide young people with appropriate, user-friendly information that addresses the relevant themes under reform. Young people may need to build their skills on how to present their findings, both orally and in written formats, in ways that can be used by policy-makers. Both young people and planners should be in agreement from the outset as to what is expected from each party for the process to be successful. Youth engagement in dialogue and decision-making processes is a long-term investment.

4.3 Selection of priority programmes and key objectives

Educational planners should recognize youth's own priorities concerning the education they need and seek their input into the selection of programmes and objectives. Young people know best their own realities and circumstances. This being so, they could effectively support educational planners in programming on career guidance and counselling with information grounded in local realities.

4.4 Design of the monitoring and evaluation framework

Educational planners should consider including youth-sensitive indicators in their monitoring and evaluation frameworks. As with any planning process, monitoring and evaluation frameworks need to be designed and implemented to demonstrate any benefits of engagement. This could include, for example, indicators to track progress on youth empowerment targets in national policies and scaling-up or replicating good practices.

The efficacy and relevance of the engagement mechanisms themselves also need to be continually monitored to ensure that representation mechanisms are capturing young people's opinions accurately. Documentation of successful examples of participatory efforts would greatly benefit the literature on the topic.

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Part II

**A review of youth engagement in national
education and youth plans and policies**

Lynne Sergeant

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Introduction

Objectives

This review was developed to feed into the high-level international policy forum organized by the International Institute of Educational Planning (IIEP) in Paris from 16 to 18 October 2012 on ‘Engaging Youth in Educational Planning for Social Transformation’.¹ Its intention was to inform the dialogue and debates on the extent to which young people are actively engaged in their education systems. The review was updated throughout 2013 to complement the findings of *Part I* of this publication: ‘*Can you hear me? Now, are you listening?*’.

Reviews of national youth policies and strategies have been undertaken in the past,² including examination of the extent of engagement of young people in the process. However, there appears not to have been any review of youth engagement in the policy and planning processes of national education systems. The present review seeks to identify the extent of youth engagement in: (1) national education plans and policies, and (2) national youth policies. It also asks whether any lessons might be learned from existing youth policies on engaging youth in educational planning.

Methodology

A list of terms pertaining to youth and engagement was used to undertake a scan of the IIEP database Planipolis,³ with the intention of identifying relevant documentation. These terms included combinations of:

- ‘youth’/‘student’/‘pupil’/‘learner’ and ‘participation’/‘engagement’/‘involvement’ for English documents;
- ‘élève’/‘étudiant’/‘jeune’/‘apprenant’ and ‘implication’/‘participation’/‘engagement’ for French documents;
- ‘joven’/‘jóvenes’/‘juventud’ and ‘participación’/‘involucrado(a)’/‘protagonista’/‘protagonismo’ for Spanish documents.

1. See www.planwithyouth.org for details.

2. See, for example, GTZ. 2005. Comparative analysis of national youth policies. Eschborn: GTZ.

3. <http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org>

In total, 66 documents from 54 countries were selected for review (see the *References* for a complete list).

Limitations

This review is not intended to be a systematic overview of all national education sector or youth-related policies and plans. It limits itself to noting the information and intentions contained in the documents themselves. The review was limited to documents written in English, French, or Spanish. Only documents developed after the year 2000 were reviewed.

Chapter 1

Key features of a national youth policy or plan

1.1 Framework documents

According to UNESCO, a national youth plan ‘represents an agreed-upon formula for both meeting the needs and aspirations of young people, and recognizing their potential as a framework for youth development’ (UNESCO, 2004: 7).

Youth policies and strategies are typically framework documents that ensure coordination and harmonization among stakeholders – principally, but not exclusively, government departments – who work with youth, and young people themselves. As noted by the national youth policy of Nigeria, youth policies:

promote collaboration between different tiers of government and civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, religious organisations on youth development programmes and ensure the mainstreaming of youth issues in the respective agenda of all government agencies, non-governmental organisations and developmental institutions (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009: 10–11).

Similarly, the national youth policy of Bhutan recommends that the Department of Youth and Sports, as the lead agency for the youth mandate, should:

act as the voice and bridge between government and decision makers such that the former is kept informed of the views of and aspirations of youth who in turn are made aware about programmes and initiatives that affect their lives (Ministry of Education, 2010: 23).

Stakeholders, including youth themselves, are typically given a number of roles, rights, and responsibilities within the youth policy, as is the case, for example, in Bhutan, England, Mauritius, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe. Nigeria notes the roles of implementation for the Federal Ministry of Youth Development, youth councils, state ministries, student unions, the private sector, international organizations, and the media. Other agencies (Federal Office of Statistics, national data bank, national population commission, universities, and social science research institutes) are mandated with monitoring and evaluation. Most importantly, however, ‘the National Youth Policy shall be based on the fact that all youth programmes must be youth-driven and youth-centred’ (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009: 10)

1.2 Defining youth

Most youth policies and strategies recognize that youth are not a homogenous group and identify what they consider to be ‘priority youth’ groups within their national youth policies and strategies, specifically marginalized or vulnerable groups.

1.3 Defining youth by age

The United Nations defines youth as people between the ages of 15 and 24, and considers young people to be those between the ages of 10 and 19. However, country definitions of youth vary considerably (*Table 1.1*).

Table 1.1 Country definitions of youth by age

Country	Age range
Afghanistan	12–25
Antigua and Barbuda	0–35 (priority range 12–30)
Bhutan	13–24
Ghana	15–35
India	16–30
Madagascar	14–35
Malawi	14–25
Nepal	16–40
Nigeria	18–35
Rwanda	14–35
Serbia	15–30
Zimbabwe	15–35

Source: Compiled from national documents reviewed (see *References*).

In certain countries the definition of youth takes into consideration education or marital status. According to the national youth strategy of Serbia:

Youth duration is socially, rather than biologically, determined. Education is the crucial factor that makes the parameters of youth shorter or longer. Youth is shorter with those groups of young people whose education lasts shorter, and reciprocally, young people who receive the longest education take longer time to grow up (Government of Serbia, 2007: 2)

The national youth policy document of Nigeria notes that:

youth, as a concept varies from culture to culture and from society to society. In most societies in Nigeria the progression from childhood to youth involves some systematic rites of passage. These rites are symbolic and have significance in that, simply by participation in them, an individual achieves a new status and position which, in itself gains validity through genuine community action and recognition (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009: 5).

The notion of social status is also reflected in the 2005 national youth policy of Rwanda:

As a short-term goal, the National youth policy will have to bridge the gaps between the school and the family, between the school and job market, between the family and job market, between the street and the family. In short, it will bridge the gaps between all those spaces and times where the youth are inactive and unproductive (Ministry of Youth, Culture, and Sports, 2005).

1.4 Defining youth by demographic group

Youth policies and strategies generally acknowledge that youth are a heterogeneous group and that different youth voices must be heard in national decision-making processes. Many countries make provisions to reach out to ‘priority’ groups or the most marginalized youth (*Table 1.2*).

Table 1.2 Country examples of priority youth groups

Country	Priority youth groups
Sierra Leone	Youth diamond diggers
Antigua and Barbuda	Teen mothers and pregnant girls
Bhutan	Young monks and nuns, domestic workers, young girls working in drayangs
Jamaica	Gifted students; boys, especially in poor rural areas
Poland	Youth from rural areas, disabled young people, youth living in areas threatened by unemployment, young people from environments endangered by social marginalization
Zimbabwe	Youth with disabilities, youth living with HIV, youth in the Diaspora

Ensuring the diversity of youth voices is an important consideration in many youth policies and strategies. For example, regarding the creation of its national youth council, the national youth policy of Nepal notes that:

Provisions shall be made that in appointing office-bearers by the Government of Nepal to the council, there shall be proportional inclusive representation of the Madhesi, indigenous peoples, Dalit, backward region, the disabled and minority communities. In addition, participation of 33 percent women at all levels shall be ensured (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010: 25).

The Kenya Basic Education Act 2013 establishes a National Council for Nomadic Education that includes a youth representative among its members (Government of Kenya, 2013).

Gender is an important consideration in many countries. One of the critical issues highlighted by the national youth policy of Bhutan is the 'limited female participation in decision-making processes particularly at higher civic level' (Ministry of Education, 2010: 21). The national youth strategy of Serbia also emphasizes the lack of gender equality in youth organizations and the lack of women in the area of international youth policy. The Swaziland national youth policy notes that youth participation is minimal in national and local decision-making processes, 'and shows very little evidence in the areas of necessary gender-sensitive measures for youth to attain equal access to enable their close involvement in the formulation, execution and monitoring and evaluation of youth activities and programmes' (Ministry of Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs, n.d.: 21).

As stated in the Estonian youth work strategy, integrated youth policy is grounded on the principle that the 'starting point is the young person, his actual state, interests, needs' (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006: 16).

1.5 Defining priority areas for action

Most national youth policies and plans cover a number of sectoral focus areas, including education and training, employment, health, and the environment. Key issues relating to education include: unequal access to schooling for girls and boys; access to secondary education; literacy rates among different population groups; improving non-formal education; and the lack of information available to young people in terms of professional and career guidance. In terms of non-formal education, youth policies and strategies may often complement the formal education policy or strategy. The national youth policy of Mauritius notes that the 'right of youth to education and work are also most critical in the empowering process' (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2009: 14). This section looks briefly at how the three focus areas of the 2012 IIEP policy forum are dealt with in youth policies and strategies.

Peacebuilding and conflict transformation

In many countries, in particular post-conflict countries, the notion of youth participation in public policy is linked to peacebuilding and conflict resolution, as well as mobilizing youth for post-conflict reconstruction.

In Paraguay, a programme entitled 'Voz de la Memoria' (the Voice of Memory) targets 15,000 youth between the ages of 14 and 18 from public schools. It aims to actively involve them in a process to recover and valorize the historical memory of the dictatorship period (1954–1989) with a view to consolidating democratic institutions (Viceministerio de la Juventud, 2011).

Nigeria also seeks to promote the active involvement of youth in peace-building efforts. The national youth policy acknowledges that 'efforts should be made by the government, the youth themselves, youth organizations and civil society organizations to detect early warning signs of conflict situations, and systematically collect and analyze information on crises prone areas around the country for the purpose of preventing violent crises' (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009: 50).

The national youth policy of Ghana notes that:

there is the need to promote conflict prevention among the youth as a major stakeholder in peace building. This will involve creating and strengthening mechanisms for peace building and institutionalizing a culture of peaceful co-existence. Government in collaboration with other stakeholders will promote active youth participation in conflict prevention, resolution and in peace building (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010: 17).

The 2003 Sierra Leone youth policy states that:

the national youth policy is anchored on the twin notion of youth empowerment and the creation of a responsible citizenry. Empowerment in a post-conflict context involves privileging and mainstreaming youth-related activities in the overall process of national reconstruction (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2003: 2).

The national youth policy of Nepal also calls for 'meaningful participation of youths in the peace process of Nepal' and states that 'meaningful participation of youths in peace building, truth and reconciliation processes shall be ensured' (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010: 22).

The national youth policy of Zimbabwe includes as a strategy:

Strengthen the capacity of youth organizations in peace building, conflict prevention, and conflict resolution through intercultural learning, civic education, human rights education and democracy, mutual respect

for cultural, ethnic, religious and political diversity (Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Empowerment, 2012: 17).

Civic engagement

Youth policies and strategies reinforce the importance of civic engagement in developing young people's skills to become active citizens as well as the benefits to the community and society in general.

The Kenyan national youth policy has as its overall goal 'to promote youth participation in democratic processes, as well as in community and civic affairs, and ensuring that youth programmes involve them and are youth-centred' (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2007: 8).

The national youth policy of Mauritius notes that:

Youth empowerment takes place when young people are given the freedom to choose, to take right decisions and be ready to accept the consequences of their decisions. ... youth empowerment occurs at home, at school, through youth organizations, government policy-making and community organizing campaigns (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2009: 17).

Similarly, the Positive Youth Development Model within the national youth policy of Antigua and Barbuda recognizes that positive youth development takes place in four interconnected social environments (home, school, peer networks, and work environments), and so 'any initiative geared towards youth development must of necessity consider the operating forces within these environments' (Ministry of Health, Sports and Youth Affairs, 2007: 9–10).

Finally, according to the national youth policy of Bhutan, the education sector has a particularly important role to play in teaching young people the right skills and attitudes to engage actively in society:

Education remains one of the key policy areas where young people can develop livelihood values, skills and attitudes that will prepare them to successfully engage with the changing global environment and contribute to national development and prosperity (Ministry of Education, 2010: 14).

According to the national strategy for higher education to 2030, a report of the strategy group for Ireland, 'Engagement with the wider community must become more firmly embedded in the mission of higher education institutions'. The group proposes to 'recognise civic engagement of their students through programme accreditation, where appropriate', and 'put in place structures and procedures that welcome and encourage the involvement of the wider community in a range of activities, including programme design and revision' (Department of Education and Skills, 2011: 21).

Specific strategies for civic education that include civic engagement, peace values, and the skills needed for effective insertion into the labour market (leadership, communication, etc.) are increasingly being developed, for example, in Montenegro and Tanzania (Tanzania, 2011; Montenegro, 2007).

Transition from education to employment

As mentioned above, access to education, training, and employment – the labour market and entrepreneurship – are typically included as focus areas in youth policies and strategies. Many countries are developing specific strategies for entrepreneurship in education, for example, Norway (Government of Norway, 2011) and Sweden (Ministry of Education and Research, 2009).

The national youth policy of Ghana notes that, ‘Government realizes the need to mainstream entrepreneurial development into school curricula to give it the necessary impetus’. Suggestions to achieve this include: the integration of entrepreneurial skills into youth development activities; facilitation of access to credit for youth; creation of corps of young entrepreneurs to serve as role models; and the celebration of successful young entrepreneurs. The policy also seeks to promote ‘the participation of the youth in modern agriculture as a viable career opportunity for the youth and as an economic and business option’ (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010: 12).

The national youth policy of Antigua and Barbuda states that ‘good schools are also well integrated with the communities they serve. They have strong links with local employers and the business sector, which helps to ensure that students understand the relevance of the curriculum to future job opportunities’ (Ministry of Health, Sports and Youth Affairs, 2007: 37).

Similarly, the Estonian youth work strategy focuses on eight areas of youth work activities, including youth work in schools, noting: ‘It is important in planning the measures for 2006–2013 to ... pay continuous attention to ensuring youth participation in the planning, performance and assessment of youth work’ (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006: 24).

Chapter 2

The benefits of youth engagement

Young people possess knowledge and experience that is unique to their situation, and have views and ideas that derive from such experience. They are social actors with skills and capacities to bring about constructive resolutions to their own problems. It is therefore legitimate for young people to contribute to programmes, policies, and decision making (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009: 46).

Youth policies and strategies explicitly recognize the legitimacy and potential of youth participation and seek to mobilize young people. The Malawi national youth policy states an intention 'to formally and clearly establish the identity and status of the Malawian youth as a distinct sector of government policy and to create a direction for youth activities and involvement in various national development programmes' (Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, n.d.: 2).

The 2007 national youth policy and agenda of Antigua and Barbuda states that:

Government and other stakeholders must consciously and consistently involve young people along the various stages of the decision-making continuum. Young people must be engaged in all areas, from identifying national problems to developing and executing an action plan and measuring outcomes (Ministry of Health, Sports and Youth Affairs, 2007: 16).

The national youth policy of Nepal recognizes that the more opportunities young people have for meaningful participation, the more experienced and competent they become. Participation for young people strengthens their commitment to, and understanding of, human rights and democracy (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010).

Within the education sector, the New Zealand strategy for strengthening youth development in schools of 2005 points out that:

the benefits of involved, engaged and motivated young people in education are two-fold. Student engagement: promotes a fuller learning environment and better academic outcomes; reflects a more inclusive learning environment and can encourage students to take up challenges at appropriate ability levels (Ministry of Youth Development, 2005: 17).

Chapter 3

What do education sector and youth policies and plans say about youth engagement in education?

The examples of youth engagement in the education sector noted in the review can be broken down into the following categories:

- Youth engagement in school and tertiary-level governance
- Youth engagement in shaping their own learning
- Youth engagement in educational policy and planning processes
- Youth engagement in monitoring and evaluating their education.

3.1 Engagement in school and tertiary-level governance

A number of countries stress the importance of student participation in education governance structures, recognizing the rights of learners to participate in decision-making processes in education institutions, to vote, and to be elected.

At school level

The national youth action plan of Montenegro calls for the establishment of more youth parliaments and councils in secondary schools to increase youth participation in the decision-making process in formal education (Republic of Montenegro, 2007).

The child and youth policy programme of Finland also focuses on student representation within schools:

In 2014, student bodies will be established as a permanent structure in all comprehensive schools by making the necessary amendments to the Basic Education Act. Schools and educational institutions will be supported in organizing and coordinating student body activities and will benefit from the sharing of good practices and from assistance for organizations that support the work of student bodies (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012: 18).

The national youth policy of Dominica notes that ‘initiatives that increase student and youth involvement in school governance shall be pursued’ (Youth Development Division, 2004: 20), while the youth policy for Antigua and Barbuda states that ‘Effective schools [...] encourage and prepare students to participate in

decision making through their representation on school committees' (Ministry of Health, Sports and Youth Affairs, 2007: 37). Kenya's education sector support programme 2005–2010 proposes girls' empowerment through participation in school management (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2005).

A number of Latin American countries, such as Paraguay (Viceministerio de la Juventud, 2011), Colombia (Ministerio de Educación, 2010), and Venezuela (Asamblea Nacional, 2009) underline the importance of youth participation in educational management as a means of consolidating democracy and of tackling the lack of interest in political participation and the disenchantment with political institutions and their representatives. It is significant that the term 'protagonista' or 'protagonismo' (which means 'taking a leading part', being protagonists) is used recurrently in many Latin American documents.

Certain countries in the region (Chile, Ecuador, Uruguay) have incorporated within their education law the need for youth to take part in the management of educational centres and to be involved in the design of educational policies. Both of Ecuador's educational laws stress the importance of student participation in secondary and higher education. At the university level students should represent between 10 and 25 per cent of voting shares. In Uruguay, the 'Consejos de Participación' are participatory councils functioning in educational centres (90 per cent by the end of 2012) with one-third of the vote given to students at all levels from lower secondary to higher education (Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, 2009).

The Norway Education Act, which came into force in 2011, states that, 'at each primary and lower secondary school there shall be one pupils' council for grades 5–7 and one for grades 8–10 with pupil representatives'. These councils 'promote the joint interests of the pupils at the school and work to create a good learning and school environment'. At upper secondary school, 'there is to be a pupils' council consisting of at least one member for every twenty pupils' (Government of Norway, 2011: 41–42).

In Serbia, the government aims to support youth participation in decision-making through in-school clubs and the establishment of student parliaments and councils. The Serbian national youth strategy includes the following measures for more active youth participation in society and in education in particular:

- Supporting initiatives whose aim is to strengthen cooperation and understanding between pupils, students, professors, parents, and representatives of local self-government, and creating the space for democratic conversation in educational institutions;

- Affirming projects directed to enabling young people to actively participate in decision-making processes in the area of education;
- Promoting and securing youth participation in decision-making processes of educational institutions (pupil and student parliaments) (Government of Serbia, 2007: 45).

In Senegal, the second phase of the action plan for the 10-year education and training programme 2005–2007 (*Programme décennal de l'éducation et de la formation plan d'action de la deuxième phase 2005–2007*) recognizes that 'students' involvement in the management of schools does not yet go beyond that of the social clubs', and suggests that:

student participation in school management should be reviewed in order to make increasing the quality of education a central concern among learners. School development projects as a mechanism for promoting the quality of education serve as a framework for communities to mobilize in support of education (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2005: 23).

The national education policy of Pakistan notes that 'for the New Education Policy to succeed it has to be a collaborative exercise with the stakeholders, at all levels of education, policy development and programme delivery.' It foresees that 'School Management Committees shall be strengthened through involvement of students, teachers, educationists, parents and society' (Ministry of Education, 2009: 22).

At tertiary level

At tertiary education level, the Higher Education Act of 2008 in Hungary recognizes the function of student unions as the representative body of students and creates the legal conditions for higher institutions to ensure 'lecturer, researcher and student participation in exercising autonomy' (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2008: 10).

The Ethiopia higher education proclamation of 2009 also spells out students' rights to participate through their union or through their representatives in the institution's governing bodies. In addition, university council members should include 'an appropriate number of academic staff and student representatives with appropriate gender mix' (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2009: 58).

Young people's participation in university governance is recognized as one of the performance indicators in the Kenya education sector support programme 2005–2010. Within the overall goal of 'providing an opportunity for appropriate university education for national development', output four stipulates 'governance and efficiency in the management of universities enhanced over the plan period'.

Indicators for this output include: ‘Increases student participation in decision making’, with the critical assumption that ‘students’ participation in decision making will lead to efficiency and good governance’ (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2005: 267).

The aims of the Namibia vocational education and training (VET) policy 2005 include:

To establish and maintain democratic and representative bodies of learners at institutional and national level in collaboration with other learners representative bodies; Represent interests of learners on management boards/boards of trustees, etc. (Ministry of Education, 2005: 15).

The strategic plan 2005–2010 for South Africa includes a major youth development component. Performance measures include, among others, ‘increased youth participation in the governance process of their institutions and in local elections’, and a ‘governance programme is designed for youth in FET [further education and training] colleges’ (Department of Education, 2005: 43). The revised strategic plan 2010/2011–2014/2015 for higher education and training in South Africa also emphasizes student leadership to encourage good governance of institutions (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011).

3.2 Young people’s engagement in shaping their own learning

Educational institutions should serve as communities where learners, staff, and parents interact to shape the learning environment. Student involvement in this process was referred to in a number of the documents reviewed.

The national youth policy of Malta promotes and encourages ‘the involvement of young people in the process of establishing, evaluating and reviewing educational curricula’ (Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth and Sport, 2010: 21). ‘Student involvement’ and ‘self-learning’ are also referred to in the Bhutan tertiary education policy (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Likewise, the National strategy for higher education to 2030 implementation plan for Ireland states that ‘higher education institutions should put in place systems to capture feedback from students, and use this feedback to inform institutional and programme management, as well as national policy’ (Department of Education and Skills, 2011: 11). The strategy itself notes that ‘students have a major contribution to make in influencing the design of the curriculum, and in reviewing and providing feedback. All higher education institutions should have formal structures to ensure that students are involved in curriculum design and revision’ (Department of Education and Skills, 2011: 53).

The Kenyan national youth policy notes that:

managers, leaders, teachers and parents should identify new ways of educating the youth about the future. The youth should no longer be taught what to learn, but how to learn, not what they are committed to but rather the value of commitment. Societal systems need to adopt open and flexible societal norms. Adults should change from working for the youth to working with the youth (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2007: 22).

The child-friendly school initiative in Thailand, as outlined in the 2004 report on education in Thailand, has as a major goal:

to promote a quality learning environment by encouraging student participation in various school activities to ensure hands-on learning experience. The approach brings together students, teachers, parents or guardians and communities to jointly develop a common vision, strategies and implementation plan. The school's academic benchmarks and the child's academic and behavioral progress are shared with stakeholder groups (Office of the Education Council, 2004: 150).

The PODER programme in El Salvador aims to 'promote the cultivation of positive attitudes and the freedom to make responsible decisions in young graduate and high school students through extracurricular activities based on five core principles: participation, opportunities, development, education and recreation' (Ministerio de Educación, 2005: 3).

Norway's strategy for entrepreneurship in education and training 2004–2008 states that:

pupils shall be given the opportunity to participate in decisions that apply to their own learning situation. This will contribute to greater awareness of their own learning processes, and to knowledge of planning, implementation and evaluation of their own and others' work. The extent of such participation will vary in relation to age and level of development (Ministry of Education and Research; Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development; Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2004: 8–9).

The Estonian youth work strategy points to companies run by pupils in several general education schools that facilitate entrepreneurial ways of thinking among young people (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006).

3.3 Young people's engagement in educational policy and planning processes

Although a number of policies and strategies stated their support for the inclusion of young people in educational decision-making processes, few mentioned how youth participation might be developed in concrete terms.

The education chapter of the Nepal three-year interim plan (2007/2008–2009/2010) states that a 'national mechanism with a view to engage youth and children in the process of preparing national policy and rules in a meaningful way will be prepared' (National Planning Commission, 2007: 267).

The Kenyan national youth policy makes a commitment to involve youth in the formulation and review of education and training policy. Serbia's national youth policy proposes to create a regulation that would enable the inclusion of young people in educational decision-making processes.

The national youth strategy of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia foresees 'active participation [of youth] in the creation of the process of education'. Strategies that support this objective include 'active inclusion of young people ... and students' NGOs in the development, implementation and evaluation of the Laws on High/Secondary-School and University Students' Standard' (Republic of Macedonia, 2005: 11). It also proposes the 'inclusion, on an equal footing, of high/secondary-school students and university students' associations in the creation of local and national education policy' (Republic of Macedonia, 2005: 53).

The Saint Kitts and Nevis white paper on education development and policy 2009–2019 states that 'a youth representative will be included on the Advisory Committees of the Curriculum Development Unit' (Ministry of Education, 2009: 71).

According to the National Youth Policy and Agenda of Antigua and Barbuda, 'during the consultation process, young people identified a number of issues critical to their education and looked to the policy as a way forward' (Ministry of Health, Sports and Youth Affairs, 2007: 60).

Among the strategic objectives established were:

To advocate for an education system that is relevant to the needs of youth and those of potential employers ... by conducting a thorough review of the existing formal education system to assess its relevance to the needs of Antiguan and Barbudan youth To promote and foster the participation of students in the administration of their institutions. To advocate for the establishment and formalization of student councils, and a National Student

Guild; To provide opportunities for training to support student activism, leadership and participation' (Ministry of Health, Sports and Youth Affairs, 2007: 61–62).

At the local level, the Norway Education Act of 2011 recommends that pupil representation in school councils be extended to county councils: 'Representatives for the pupils in upper secondary education have the right to attend and speak at meetings of county boards in accordance with provisions corresponding to those applying to employees' (Government of Norway, 2011: 43).

It would appear that youth engagement in educational policy and planning processes is becoming more widespread in more recent education sector policies and strategies. For example, the 2010 education sector plan of Liberia refers to youth engagement within the initial consultations for drafting the plan, through the Federation of Liberian Youths. According to the plan, 6.9 per cent of participants in the post-drafting consultation are students. The plan also notes that 'youths, students and women were very vocal' (Ministry of Education, 2010: 23).

Youth were also involved in consultations for the development of the South Sudan general education strategic plan 2012–2017. The plan highlights the importance of including youth in educational planning processes, including as a risk-mitigation strategy: 'Enhance youth engagement in civic affairs and educational planning for youth to become [a] positive leadership force within their communities and in the education system' (Ministry of General Education and Instruction, 2012: 82).

3.4 Young people's engagement in monitoring and evaluating their education

A few documents reviewed included examples of monitoring and evaluation of the education sector by young people.

The national youth strategy of Serbia prescribes the inclusion of parents, pupils, students, and the local community in monitoring and evaluating the achievements of educational institutions and establishing mechanisms for assessing the level of young people's satisfaction with the education services they receive.

A similar example is the Ghana education strategic plan 2010–2020, which suggests that education service delivery could be improved if pupils and students were involved in the annual review of staff (Ministry of Education, 2012).

Somaliland's education sector strategic plan 2012–2016 also recommends that learners' opinions be included in the quality assurance evaluation (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2012).

Chapter 4

Obstacles to youth engagement

Young people's social and economic conditions, their level of education, their exposure to governance institutions, and societal attitudes all have a bearing on the opportunities available to them in terms of involvement in governance and decision-making. This review revealed a number of challenges to meaningful youth engagement.

4.1 Traditional hierarchies

In several countries, there is evidence for a relationship between traditional social hierarchies and youth participation in decision-making. The national youth plan of Bhutan, for example, states that:

youth-related issues also impinge upon GNH [gross national happiness], our philosophy of 'development with values' and place pressure on our traditional culture and way of life. Rather than viewing rapidly changing youth lifestyle and culture as threats or youth deficiencies, the concept of GNH must be harnessed and employed to build a strong culture incorporating both the traditional and modern views. A GNH-guided youth Policy will enable the drawing together of our unique heritage and identity within the context of change and will empower young people to prepare themselves for the future and provide direction and inspiration for the society as a whole (Ministry of Education, 2010: 7).

The Joint programme document of the National youth programme of Afghanistan notes that:

the traditionally conservative and hierarchical structure of Afghan society excludes youth from participatory decision-making at all levels. The disenfranchisement of youth is initiated at the family level, where decisions regarding their marriage partner, education, professional endeavours, and social activities, are all dictated to them by senior family members. Youth have no traditional venue for expressing their views, are prevented from speaking in public gatherings, and have no role in community decision-making (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2007: 14).

The national youth policy of Nigeria acknowledges that:

the demand for the recognition of the right of young people to be heard, to have their views given serious consideration, and to play an active role in promoting their own best interest has seen a growing acceptance worldwide in the past decade. This demand represents a profound challenge to traditional attitudes towards young people in most societies of the world. It means a radical change in youth-adult relationships in all areas of life including the family, school, local communities, social services, and at local, national and international levels (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009: 46).

The national youth action plan of Montenegro notes that:

the generation gap generates feelings of distrust and lack of understanding between older people and youth and is also reflected in the institutions of power and other decision makers who do not involve young people in this process (Republic of Montenegro, 2007: 27).

The plan recognizes that ‘the existing public administration does not have any institutions devoted to youth issues’ and that the current education system does not offer organized advisory services for pupils and students, whether related to further education and career promotion, or in relation to the fulfilment of rights and life choices (Republic of Montenegro, 2007: 28).

The Kenyan national youth policy notes the: ‘low status given to youth. Existing structures and prevailing attitudes do not provide an enabling environment for youth participation in decision-making, planning and implementation processes’ (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2007: 3).

The national youth policy of Malawi also notes that the ‘breakdown of traditional cultural systems has also had a negative effects on youth development’. This often has an impact on girls and young women, in particular (Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, n.d.: 3).

4.2 Lack of institutional commitment

National, local, and school-level mechanisms for youth participation need the support and recognition of government and school managers if they are to be effective.

According to the national youth policy of Serbia,

Student parliaments exist in numerous schools. However, there are significant problems concerning the functioning of these parliaments with regard to their role, rights, obligations and the framework of their activities, which are not clearly defined. Although a large number of students (96%) know that

there is a student parliament in their school, only 21% of them know its role, 50% are partially familiar with it, and 25% do not know what its function is. According to research, 88% of students are not active in the work of the student council.

Student parliaments are not recognized by professors and parents as a legitimate and important way of students' movements and organizations. The parliament's opinion is frequently irrelevant and disrespected. Students have just observer status on the school board, with the possibility to comment, but without any possibility to make decisions. This practice is demotivating for students, since they do not see an advisory role as significant enough for making changes. No funds are allocated for student parliaments from the school or municipal budget (Government of Serbia, 2007: 12).

4.3 Lack of coordination among stakeholders

As a cross-cutting issue, youth policy development and implementation affects several government departments (education, employment, health, etc.). It also necessitates that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which are providing youth services and programmes be involved as a stakeholder in youth policy development.

The Kenyan national youth policy points to:

unclear and uncoordinated youth policies and programmes. While a number of Government Ministries and youth organisations have their own programmes and sectoral youth policies, lack of a national definition of youth and effective co-ordination mechanisms hamper their effectiveness (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2007: 3).

The national policy of youth of Georgia notes that current realities of youth organizations include:

insufficient financial resources for operations; insufficient communication with donor and international organizations acting in Georgia; low skill level in organizational management, project preparation, international operations, lobbying and advocating of the ideas, event planning and in interactions with other subjects; low quality of participation in national policy planning and implementation (Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, 2010: 15).

A few of the documents reviewed also suggest that the volume of youth organizations operating in countries, the lack of organization or coordination among them, and insufficient resources sometimes act as barriers to youth participation in national or local decision-making. The national youth policy of Ghana notes that 'many registered youth groups and organizations are operating independently' (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010: 14).

Similar issues are noted in the national youth action plan of Montenegro:

An evident obstacle in recognizing and accepting youth as equal actors in society and social changes is the insufficient cooperation between youth organizations and organizations for youth: from insufficient exchange of information, quite limited number of united actions, to the non-existence of a network which would represent youth interests and act on behalf of youth in a loud and clear manner. The competitive attitudes toward each other between those working on youth issues are additionally complicated by the lack of the necessary coordinated presentation and fulfilment of youth aims (Republic of Montenegro, 2007: 29).

Chapter 5

Solutions to facilitate youth engagement

This review noted several examples of measures currently being developed or previously implemented to facilitate youth engagement in policy and planning processes. Several of the reviewed documents contained suggestions on how to address the challenges and barriers to youth engagement.

5.1 Institutionalizing mechanisms for youth engagement

For youth engagement mechanisms to be effective they must be formally integrated into national decision-making processes and receive adequate funding. The national youth policy of Nigeria has recognized that:

efforts should be made by government to institutionalize democratic systems for the youth. This might take the form of legal reforms that give young people the right to develop democratic structures in schools and colleges or by introducing formal mechanism for political dialogue between youth and those in government (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009: 47).

The South African national youth policy notes that it will ‘integrate youth development into the mainstream of government policies, programmes and the national budget’ (Government of South Africa, 2008: 5).

The Malawi national youth policy seeks to ‘institutionalize and facilitate youth participation in the formulation and review of legislative policies and general decision making machinery’ (Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, n.d.: 4).

In Pakistan, ‘youth will be given representation in Think Tanks, policy formulation and implementation fora’ (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2008: 11).

The Uganda ministerial policy statement on education and sports 2012/2013 mentions one of the achievements of the Policy, Planning and Sport Services, that it ‘established a co-ordination youth desk with an interim working committee, a database and information system for youth activities at the UNATCOM [Uganda National Commission for UNESCO]’ (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2012: 22).

The state programme of educational development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011–2020 includes as a target indicator the ‘share of young people actively involved in implementation of the measures in the sphere of youth policy and patriotic education’ (Ministry of Education and Science, 2010: 5–6).

According to the document, youth policy in Kazakhstan faces a number of issues, including: 'the share of young people participating in [the] decision-making process regarding youth policy issues in representative bodies does not reach 1 per cent' (Ministry of Education and Science, 2010: 13). The target for 2020 is to increase the share of young people running for representative bodies to 15 per cent. The targets also include the establishment of a Department for Youth Policy to help coordinate the activity of NGO youth organizations and youth.

The national youth strategy of Serbia calls for the establishment of 'regulation that enables the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes in the area of education' (Government of Serbia, 2007: 61).

According to a 2010 Council of Europe evaluation of child and youth participation in Finland, extensive legislation and formal structures are among the strengths of youth participation in the country.

5.2 Strengthening intersectoral collaboration and networking opportunities

The national youth policy of Sierra Leone states that each relevant sector will be required to create a youth focal point to regularly provides guidance, monitor youth-related programmes within the ministry, and work with other members towards promoting youth participation in the decision-making process. The National Youth Advisory Council acts as the central meeting place for all youth organizations in the country.

The policy also highlights a need 'to create reliable and efficient networks through which youths all over the country can easily and rapidly access valuable information that are beneficial to them or by which agencies serving them can reach them' (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2003: 2).

According to the national youth policy 2009–2014 of South Africa, a Youth Desk has been created under the presidency to provide support and advisory services on youth development to political principals, and to coordinate the activities of government departments through the government cluster systems (Government of South Africa, 2008). In Kenya, the national youth policy proposes the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee on youth that comprises representatives of relevant ministries that deal with youth issues (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2007).

The Estonian youth work strategy highlights the need for the 'formulation, planning and implementation of integrated youth policy ... executed in cooperation with different partners. The development requires: creation of a cooperation

network at local level; [and] improvement of the cooperation of the concerned ministries' (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006: 18).

The national youth policy of Ghana states that:

networking and partnership have been identified as a strategic option for building synergy among youth groups. The need for networking stems from the fact that international youth-oriented organizations have begun the process of youth networks and partnerships to enable the youth all over the world to exchange ideas and experiences that will enhance their development. Accordingly, government will through appropriate governmental and nongovernmental institutions seek to provide the requisite environment to enable recognized youth organizations to network with each other productively within and outside the country. This may be achieved through exchange programmes, including internship in sister-working organizations, organized tours, youth camps, intra and inter district/regional educational, cultural and sporting competitions and exchanges (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010: 29).

5.3 Capacity development

The youth policy of Antigua and Barbuda notes that:

the Department of Youth Affairs and the National Youth Policy Task Force recognizing that in order for the policy process to be meaningful and empowering activity, it had to be inclusive and engaging. Consequently, a consultative approach was deemed most appropriate. However, as the process started it was discovered that many persons were unfamiliar and uncomfortable interacting this way. This affected turn out at consultations early in the process. Additionally, many persons expressed the view that such consultations seem not to yield tangible results and were not willing to expend the time. Notwithstanding this initial unease, there was a steady increase in interest and momentum and the numbers grew significantly by the end of the consultation phase (Ministry of Health, Sports and Youth Affairs, 2007: 104).

The 2005–2010 strategic plan for South Africa includes a training component to facilitate students' participation in governance structures. Its strategic objective is to 'ensure that all youth are able to participate as active and responsible citizens', and proposed as a performance measure for 2005 that Representative Councils of Learners (RCLs) in nodal areas be trained to participate constructively in the governance processes at schools (Department of Education, 2005: 84).

In Norway, a provision of the Education Act of 2011 supported student representation on school councils: 'school environment representatives have the

right to any necessary training and exemption from attendance of classes in order to perform such duties' (Government of Norway, 2011: 37).

The need to train and thus empower community, institutional, and family stakeholders is recognized in the national youth policy of Gambia, which states that:

it is not only youth who need to be empowered, but parents and policy makers alike. Because of the way youths are perceived by society – that is as people who are irresponsible, unfocused and clueless –, they are not usually targeted when it comes to policy issues and when they are targeted it is usually as add on to policies rather than an integral part of the policy (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2009: 12).

The policy states that:

it is extremely important for Management and Implementation purposes that certain studies are carried out and crucial training provided for the Ministry of Youth and Sports and their Satellite Institutions as well as their key partners in investing in youth, youth analysis and youth mainstreaming. The training will be very specific and should be tailor made for the specific needs of program and policy management (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2009: 22).

The national youth policy of Ghana notes that: 'mentoring is a powerful personal development and empowerment tool' and emphasizes the need to ensure its inclusion in youth development programmes (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010: 14). Nigeria underlines the importance of democratic student unionism as a launching pad for the training of youth leadership roles and democratic cultures.

In a similar vein, the national youth policy of Mauritius 'recognizes that youth deserves to play a major role in decision-making processes in all areas concerning them. They must be active participants in the process and product of development. This can only be possible if youth is equipped with requisite knowledge and skills indispensable to assuming these responsibilities' (Ministry of Youth and Sport, 2009: 17).

The *National youth programme: Joint programme document* of Afghanistan includes a number of output achievement indicators, among which are the enhanced capacity of civil servants at central and provincial level to provide better services to young people and raise the awareness and responsiveness of development planners and policy-makers (government, aid agencies, donors) to the situation of youth in Afghanistan. The document identifies 'regional ties, communication and collaboration with neighbouring countries and regional

organizations' as means to strengthen the capacity of government to provide youth services (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2007: 4).

5.4 A more important role for youth at local level

The 2012 national youth policy of India¹ notes that 'while macro-level action can set out broad policies and directions, it needs to be recognized that local level action can bring in better and more enduring results' (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, 2012: 13). The policy advocates that 'youth need to be involved in monitoring the programmes at village/Panchayat level, which will improve the quality and bring down misuse and corruption' (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, 2012: 20). It recommends that each state enunciate its own policy and that states also develop additional programmes to respond to the specific needs of youth in the region.

The national youth policy of Sierra Leone emphasizes the need to support youth participation and representation at local or district level and proposes the establishment of mechanisms for youth participation at local level:

District Youth Committees will be set up in every district. They will be tasked with the following: to identify major youth concerns, needs and opportunities in their district; to identify projects/programmes that can be recommended for funding and support; to promote collaboration and cooperation amongst Youth organisations operating within the District; to plan, develop and implement projects and programmes that are beneficial to young people; to collect, collate and compile data pertaining to Youth in the district (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2003: 8).

The national youth programme of Afghanistan also includes the establishment of local youth committees in villages and urban neighbourhoods and the design of local youth development plans among its output indicators.

The national youth strategy of Serbia proposes, as a measure, to establish mechanisms for youth participation in decision-making processes in the area of education at the local level.

5.5 Knowledge generation: Research by and for youth

One of the main findings of this review is the absence of information and data on the situation of youth within countries. The Swaziland national youth policy argues that there is a lack of youth-specific data to inform policies and programmes,

1. A new youth policy was approved by the Government of India on 9 January 2014, but a copy was not available at the time of the present review.

and a lack of monitoring and evaluation. The national youth policy of Zambia acknowledges that 'there have been difficulties in trying to retrieve information on youth because of inadequate database and research on youth in Zambia. The existing strategies and approaches do not take sufficient account of youth needs and potential' (Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development, 2006: 3).

The national youth policy of Zimbabwe 'recognizes the primacy of research, data and information dissemination to comprehensive development, empowerment of young people and their full integration in national affairs' (Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenization and Empowerment, 2012: 26), and includes as a strategy to 'meaningfully involve all youths and in particular youths with disabilities, young women and young people in rural areas in the planning, generation and dissemination of data' (Ministry of Youth development, Indigenization and Empowerment, 2012: 27).

The national youth policy of the Gambia has called for a focus on evidence-based policy-making to target certain youth in society. The policy recommends to 'utilize research findings from studies in youth dynamics and power relations at the level of national, district and community levels and to organize public dialogues, and household advocacy involving traditional, religious and community leaders' (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2009: 19). It especially notes the importance of 'encourag[ing] youth research on managing and preventing conflicts, migration and employment issues' (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2009: 22).

The national youth policy of Nigeria notes that 'efforts should be made to widely disseminate relevant information to the youths, and also facilitate access to them for the promotion of greater and more effective roles in the political process' (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009: 47). It proposes to establish a 'data bank on youth activities and youth development, and regularly update the situational analysis of youth development programmes in the country' (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009: 76). The national youth policy of Malawi also identifies as an objective the establishment and maintenance of 'a data bank for easy and quick retrieval of information pertaining to the youth' (Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture, n.d.).

While contextualized research is needed to ensure that policies are relevant to the situation of young people, it is also important that youth are involved in the design and undertaking of research and surveys that concern them. The strategy for youth development in New Zealand schools emphasizes that:

there is a need for young people to be involved in collecting and analysing data. This not only extends them in academic ways but also ensures

assumptions are credible and valid. By being involved, young people can guide and shape programmes, units of work, or activities through awareness of what is working. Good information and feedback systems allow formative assessments and summative evaluations to quantify the difference that youth development approaches have on the lives of young people (Ministry of Youth development, 2005: 18).

5.6 Providing information in user-friendly formats

The national youth policy of Kenya states that ‘youth have a right to access information that will improve their livelihoods, enabling them to effectively participate in development. This could be achieved through: (i) Subsidizing the cost of production and airing of youth programmes that will spur socio-economic development nature, (ii) Improving access to information for the youth’ (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2007: 12–13).

The national youth action plan of Montenegro allocates a budget for web page development and maintenance of a database of information about youth issues to ensure the regular promotion of information related to youth policy and youth concerns.

The national youth policy of Malta has recognized the importance of making information about youth participation in society accessible to all young people, and has initiated the development of a youth portal to simplify access to such information, while also providing networking facilities.

The national youth policy of Mauritius includes objectives to ‘enhance the quality of information through research to ease the decision making process of young people; to brief young people to be cautious when using information; [and] to develop the analytical capacity of youth in receiving information’ (Ministry of Youth and Sport, 2009: 27).

In Australia, the Office for Youth commissioned the development of the effective communications project to support government agencies in their communication with young people (Office for Youth, 2009).

5.7 Engage and mobilize youth from the outset

The national youth policy of Antigua and Barbuda notes the following key factors as successes of the policy process:

The involvement of a wide cross section of young people and their youth organizations at all levels and all phases of the process.

The involvement of the wide cross section of the society to include youth organizations, community based organizations and nongovernment organizations, civil and corporate society.

The involvement and empowering of marginalized groups of young people, particularly persons with disability.

The involvement of persons across the political divide and that fact that the process was not influenced by the present political directorate (Ministry of Health, Sports and Youth Affairs, 2007: 104).

In Luxembourg, the *Pacte pour la Jeunesse* (pact for youth) 2012–2014 was developed through consultations and dialogue between the government and young people, the youth parliament, youth organizations, and services working with and for young people. The pact recognizes the importance of informing young people on their right to participate in school environments and underlines the need for awareness-raising among head teachers and teachers (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2012).

The national youth policy of Nepal notes the capacity of young people to motivate their peers to take up education and training, and states that ‘educated and competent youths shall be mobilized as a driving force for making publicity of education to the youths falling in the priority group and the special priority group’ (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010: 23).

The Gambia youth policy, acknowledging that the lack of youth participation may be due to ‘power relations’ (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2009: 1), suggests that there is a need for ‘continuous sensitization’ on the role of young people in national development, particularly among older members of society (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2009: 18).

5.8 Work with traditional and social media for outreach purposes

The national youth policy of Bhutan recommends that ‘media reports stories/news are related to young people in a responsible manner especially those that are sensitive. They should also highlight and report on positive issues’ (Ministry of Education, 2010: 22).

In the United Kingdom (England), ‘social media was used extensively through the Positive for Youth consultation process to enable discussion with and between young people on a wide range of issues’ (Department for Education, 2011: 5). The youth policy of Antigua and Barbuda also recognizes the usefulness

of 'the internet to create awareness and elicit feedback' (Ministry of Health, Sports and Youth Affairs, 2007: 104).

The Mauritius national youth policy includes along its objectives the creation of 'a platform to enable the youth to formulate and implement its own development projects through online networking' (Ministry of Youth and Sport, 2009: 28).

The Pakistan national youth policy notes that:

All public and private media are expected to play an important role in various initiatives envisaged under the policy. They will be persuaded to undertake Youth programmes of prime times and start Youth Channels, if possible. Media would be advised to allocate prime time for youth programmes on regular basis while PTV [Pakistan Television] may set up a specific youth channel (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2008: 27).

Conclusions

The findings of this review include many positive intentions on the part of governments to engage youth in the development of youth policy, but fewer references to youth engagement in education. Documents produced by the education sector in different countries contained references to youth engagement in institutional governance, but only limited references to engagement in education policy development and implementation at the national level. Youth engagement in education is more often than not referred to within the national youth policy or strategy, rather than the education sector policy or strategy.

Although educational policies and strategies are increasingly developed through multi-stakeholder participatory processes, youth themselves are rarely considered as stakeholders in the process. Youth engagement in national education sector policies and strategies is seen most frequently in the governance of tertiary education or in civic activities within the community, rather than in education policy development and implementation processes.

Increasingly, countries are recognizing the need for a holistic approach to youth affairs and are preparing cross-sectoral youth policies that include education. Strong cooperation between ministries in charge of youth and education, and coherent policy development cannot be over-emphasized.

The benefits to young people and to society more generally of involving young people in the planning and shaping of their education experience have yet to be fully exploited. Most young people spend the majority of their time at school or in an educational institution. Such environments can serve as a training ground for key leadership, interpersonal, communication, analytic, and problem-solving skills, all of which are transferable and much needed by young people in their transition to the world of work and for life beyond schooling.

The education sector must recognize that meaningful youth engagement requires an overhaul of the way schools and education systems function – including new ways of dialoguing with, teaching, and acting towards learners, in order to foster the skills that young people need to become responsible and productive citizens.

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About the book



Young people, being a main stakeholder in education, ought to be involved in educational planning. This simple idea is examined in all its facets in this publication, which argues that, in addition to a rights-based defence, research provides several grounds for involving young people in planning, notably the benefits to be obtained by both parties. For example, planners can gain efficiency-enhancing insights from users of the education system, while youth build their transferable skills for the world of work.

Although recognizing obstacles – such as the difficulty of finding representative samples of youth delegates and the lack of technical knowledge among young people – the authors conclude that, given the significant benefits of youth participation, Ministries of Education should make the necessary efforts to overcome these. To help them to do so, this book presents solutions which can be adapted to a number of contexts.

A thorough review of the extent of youth engagement in existing national education and youth policies and plans is presented in the second half of the book, along with a summary of what lessons can be learned from these experiences.

About the authors

Anja Hopma currently works for a Paris-based French charity which supports students from low-income backgrounds (Frateli). Before this, as a research assistant at IIEP, she worked on fee-free policies and decentralization reforms in education. She has done research in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Vanuatu, and managed a project on early childhood education in Cambodia for a French NGO (Chemins d'Enfances). She completed her Master's in International Development in 2012 at Sciences Po Lille.

Lynne Sergeant is an Information Specialist at IIEP, where she has been working on the Institute's youth engagement in education programme since 2012. Before joining IIEP, she worked as a librarian at the University of Hertfordshire (UK), in the education service at the British Council in Paris, and as an education and social policy research assistant at the British Embassy, Paris. She received her Master of Arts in Translation from the University of London.