

Young People are Reshaping the Future



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OVERVIEW

"Young people are more active than ever in their communities and across global movements, so how is it that young people do not have a more prominent seat at the decision-making table on issues that are urgent for both present and the future?"

1. Consultation, Collaboration and Youth action
2. How children and young people influence policy-makers in Nicaragua
3. Getting the mix right



Do participation theories and models help?

The collage features five diagrams:

- Hart's Ladder**: A ladder with eight rungs representing levels of participation, from '1. Manipulation' at the bottom to '8. Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults' at the top.
- Pathways to Participation**: A flowchart showing 'START HERE' leading to 'Levels of participation' and 'Openings > Opportunities'.
- The Participation Tree**: A tree diagram with a trunk labeled 'The Participation Tree' and branches representing different levels of participation.
- The Lundy Model**: A diagram with three colored boxes: 'SPACE' (orange), 'AUDIENCE' (red), and 'THE RIGHT TO EXPRESS VIEWS' (green), with 'THE RIGHT TO HAVE VIEWS GIVEN DUE WEIGHT' (teal) below.
- The Participation Matrix**: A grid with columns for 'CHILDREN' and 'ADULTS' and rows for 'Participatory', 'Consultative', 'Informative', and 'Symbolic'.

Lansdown's simplified typology of participation



Taken from "Every child's right to be heard" (Lansdown 2010):
A user guide to UN CRC General Comment 12

Consultation:

Is when adults ask young people for their views, and the young people are not involved beyond this.



Collaboration:

Is when adults and young people work together, sharing roles and responsibilities in planning and carrying out an activity.

Youth Action ("Protagonismo"):

Activities are initiated, organised or run by young people themselves (adults may provide support, though not always necessary).



None of these is inherently good or bad in itself. There are two sides to each one...

Consultation

The powerful can listen to and take on board young people's views and this can have a positive influence on policy-making etc.



OR:

They can go through the motions of a consultation and ignore the results.

Repeated consultations and no change leads to "Consultation fatigue".



"So we are very angry and frustrated because we have so many opportunities to have these nice conferences online and try to discuss about the progress made in the child protection system and yet we do not see it. At the grassroots we do not feel it and we do not see it. I know this is not the sort of presentation that you were looking for, but this is the tough truth from the grassroots that we were asked to deliver to you." (Andreas, Care-Leaver from Romania)

Collaboration:

Adults can facilitate a process where we work together with young people sharing roles and responsibilities according to interests and abilities.



OR:

Adults can use their greater power, and access to resources, to manipulate the whole process to get whatever they want at the end of it.

Youth Action ("Protagonismo")

Adults can support young people's independent initiatives:

- provide resources: transport, food, safe place to meet etc.
- help them get access to the powerful who make decisions and control purse-strings.



OR:

Adults can either completely ignore the young people's efforts, or worse, they can attempt to silence them or even punish them for getting out of line.

Consultation <---> Collaboration <---> Youth action

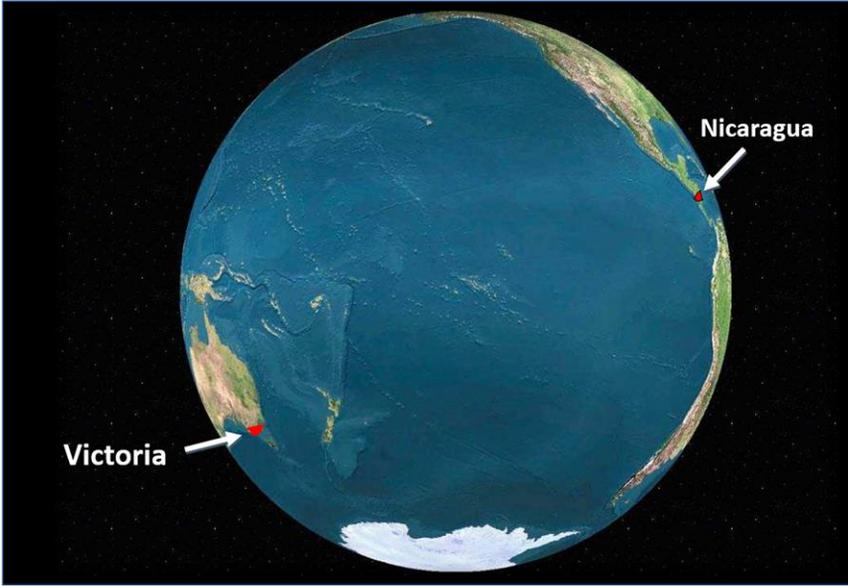
So ... it's not that one kind of participation is good and another kind is bad. They all have a good and bad side.

It's a question of getting the mix right.

- Consult (and respond to consultations) wherever there's an opportunity.
- But DON'T think of consultation as the answer; more a jumping-off point.



How do young people influence public policy in Nicaragua?



Research project "HOW CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE INFLUENCE POLICY-MAKERS IN NICARAGUA" CESESMA/University of the North of Nicaragua 2010



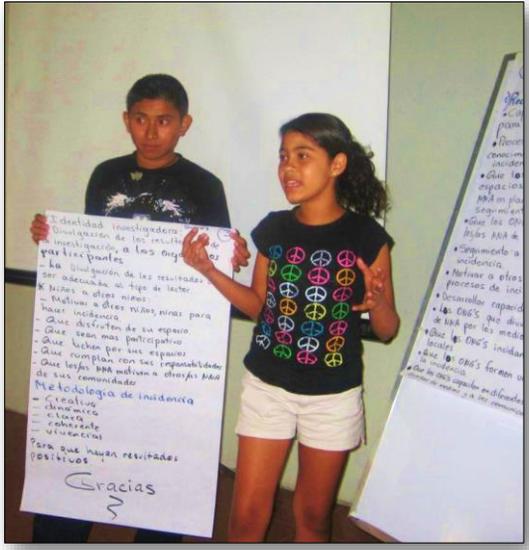
Final report



Summary in English



Child-friendly report





Adults and children collaborated to analyse four in-depth case studies of experiences where children and young people's direct influence on public policy was clearly documented and attested by public officials (Town Mayors, Ministry of Education officials etc).



We identified a number of factors that contributed to the effectiveness of the young people's initiatives to influence policy-makers...

Key findings

1. The key issues must be the ones that matter to the young people

Young people are more likely to impact policy decisions when they are campaigning on issues that they identify as important, not just responding to consultations.



2. Prior processes of organisation, preparation and training generate empowerment



Young people who succeed in influencing policy-makers are likely to be well-prepared, trained and organised, and to believe in their own ability to advocate for change; in other words, empowered.

3. Young people need their own organising spaces

This means spaces where they make the decisions (albeit often facilitated by adults), which they can use as springboards to approach adult decision-makers with confidence and knowledge of the issues.



4. Existing consultative structures (Youth Councils, School Councils etc) can be an important part of this, but often they themselves need to change:



- Become more democratic, more open and inclusive;
- More empowered to take real decisions;
- In control of their own agenda and self-organisation;
- Able to influence matters of resources and budgets;
- Better dialogue with school or local authority adult leadership.

5. Young people can provide their own leadership



Young leaders with good organisational and communication skills play an important role in taking forward young people's ideas and proposals to influence policy-makers.

6. Adults can provide valuable supports

Supportive adults should encourage young people to organise for themselves, support autonomy and gradually diminish dependence on adults.



7. Parents and wider family are important

Understanding, backing (and, ideally, involvement) of parents and wider family are important supports for young people to become effective as change-makers.



8. Working WITH with those in power is usually a good "Plan A"



Young people are more likely to be successful in influencing policy-makers through liaison and coordination with the authorities, and not by clashing with them

BUT...

If policy-makers/power-holders do not listen, if they renege on commitments, and refuse to be held accountable, THERE MUST BE A "PLAN B":

- ☑ Youth Action to insist on change
- ☑ Youth Action to demand respect for rights
- ☑ Youth Action to put the media spotlight on injustice or discrimination
- ☑ Youth Action to hold duty-bearers accountable
- ☑ Youth Action to challenge abuse of power.



Getting the mix right

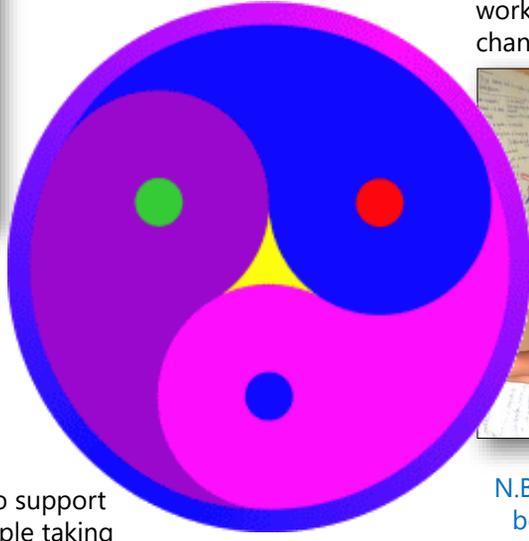


We need to consult young people – find out their views

We need to collaborate with young people and work in partnership to change things



We need to support young people taking their own initiatives.



N.B. There is no tension between these: They work in harmony

A final question: Do you know these young people?



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