Building students' ownership:

a case for the necessity of youth participation in effective education programming

Presentation Overview

➜ Oaktree & Youth Participation

➜ Education in Timor-Leste

➜ Program Context

➜ Methodology

➜ Findings

➜ Programming Implications

The Bottom Line: Increasing students' involvement and share of school decision-making processes can further impact of educational programming at schools
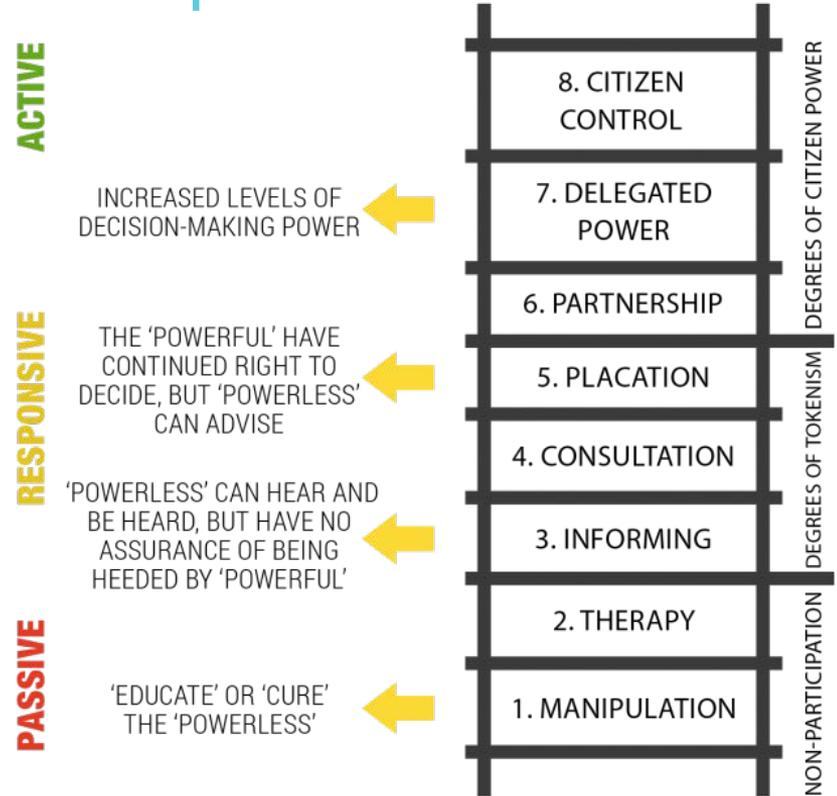
Oaktree and Youth Participation

Vision: A world where all people have the opportunity to thrive

Mission: Young people leading, demanding, and creating a more just world

Youth Participation and Ownership

Youth participation is looking at young people's ability to access and influence decision-making and development processes.

Young people are the **biggest stakeholders and beneficiaries** in education programming.

ACTIVE

8. CITIZEN CONTROL

INCREASED LEVELS OF DECISION-MAKING POWER → 7. DELEGATED POWER

6. PARTNERSHIP

RESPONSIVE

THE 'POWERFUL' HAVE CONTINUED RIGHT TO DECIDE, BUT 'POWERLESS' CAN ADVISE → 5. PLACATION

4. CONSULTATION

'POWERLESS' CAN HEAR AND BE HEARD, BUT HAVE NO ASSURANCE OF BEING HEEDED BY 'POWERFUL' → 3. INFORMING

2. THERAPY

PASSIVE

'EDUCATE' OR 'CURE' THE 'POWERLESS' → 1. MANIPULATION

DEGREES OF CITIZEN POWER

DEGREES OF TOKENISM

NON-PARTICIPATION

Source: https://360participation.com/models-of-participation/
Arnstein, S. (1971) 'A Ladder of Citizen's Participation', Journal of the American Institute of Planners, no 35, July.

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Education in Timor-Leste

- Colonized by Portugal until 1975, occupied by Indonesia after declaring independence from Portugal
- Independence gained in 2002, after conflict and resistance movement
- Youth bulge - over half the population under the age of 30
- Significant national and international investment in primary education in line with MDG and EFA priorities
  - Not supported with investment in secondary education
- Education quality is seen as low, with exams in Portuguese but instruction in Tetum, rote learning, and teachers without training

About the Program

- **Ba Futuru**

- 8 Year Partnership

- **Inspiring Young Leaders through Quality Education (QE) Program**
  - Teacher Training
  - School Governance Support
  - Teacher Mentoring
- **3 Year project with 3 phases**
  - Phase 1: Resource development, consultation with stakeholders, outreach to schools
  - Phase 2: Program implementation in Manatuto municipality
  - Phase 3: Program implementation in Baucau municipality

Evaluating Our Programming

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Evaluation Context

- End of project evaluation, conducted after 3rd and final year

- Evaluation conducted in the two 3rd year schools: Venilale and Quelicai Secondary Schools

- Evaluation Focus: Effectiveness of School Governance Support

  - Establishment of School Management Committees (SMCs)

The evaluation seeks to understand how participatory governance through the SMCs facilitate ownership, and has contributed to QE outcomes and their sustainability. This involves understanding degrees of ownership and accountability, how further programming could better engage with stakeholders through SMCs, and what other barriers stakeholders may face that intersected with the impact of the QE project.

School Management Committees

- Participatory school governance
- Established as part of the QE program
- Representatives:
    - School director and vice-director
    - Teachers
    - Students
    - Parents
- Initially facilitated by Ba Futuru

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Evaluation & Methodology Research

Evaluation(s)	Evaluators	Participants	Type of Participation
Evaluation 1: Venilale Secondary School	Oaktree staff Support: Interpreter	School Management Committee Student Representatives	Group evaluation activities Focus group dialogues, group evaluation activities
Evaluation 2: Quelicai Secondary School	Oaktree staff Support: Interpreter	School Management Committee Student Representatives	Group evaluation activities Focus group dialogues, group evaluation activities

Evaluation Findings: A Snapshot

Venilale Secondary School

- School Management Committee as participatory governance structure was instituted over the top of existing decision-making processes
- Students had little ownership over decision-making, project outcomes, and keeping direct project beneficiaries (teachers, school directors) accountable
- Fewer changes observed in teaching methods, auditing…

Quelicai Secondary School

- School Management Committee became key decision-making structure for school, not just tokenistic or secondary to existing decision-making processes
- Students had increased ownership over decision-making, project outcomes, and keeping direct project beneficiaries (teachers, school directors) accountable
- Increased changes and impact observed in teaching methods, auditing, and student participation in educational outcomes

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Quelicai Secondary School: The Case Study

The Feedback Box:

- Student representatives on the School Management Committee were able to build stronger relationships with school management and their teachers
- Students had a greater understanding of the QE project and what project activities were meant to achieve
- Students highlighted the value of receiving the same leadership and other trainings administered to the School Management Committee

- The SMC, as part of the QE Project, instituted an anonymous feedback box for students
- Student representatives on the SMC encouraged and facilitated their peers to give feedback on their teacher's teaching methods
- Student representatives leveraged their relationships with school management and teachers to ensure accountability

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The Challenges

- Willingness of decision-makers to share decision-making power with students
- Building relationships between stakeholders (ie students and teachers, students and school director, students and project administrators)

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Programming Implications

- Teachers often perceive students to be the ones responsible for the quality of their education (IE: students get what they put in, if students are bad, then their educational outcomes are their own part) - observed at Venilale
- When students understand educational programming at their schools, project activities, and expected outcomes, they are more likely to keep program participants/ beneficiaries accountable
- Increasing students' involvement and share of school decision-making processes can further impact of educational programming at schools

YOUNG PEOPLE
LEADING, DEMANDING
AND CREATING A
MORE JUST WORLD

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