CARE CORNER

Engagement: What Does It Mean For Our Adolescents?

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Scope of discussion

Engagement

Concepts and ingredients for positive engagement

Case Study

Sharing on a vocational engagement initiative designed with youth centricity in mind

Definition of Engagement

engagement

noun

UK /ɪnˈɡeɪdʒ.mənt/ US /ɪnˈɡeɪdʒ.mənt/

engagement *noun* **(MARRIAGE)**

[C]

an agreement to marry someone:

- *They **announced** their engagement at the party on Saturday.*
- *an engagement **party***

engagement *noun* **(INTEREST)**

[U]

the fact of being involved with something:

- *He was known for his engagement **with** the problems of the most difficult students.*
- *their lack of engagement **in** politics*

[U]

the process of encouraging people to be interested in the work of an organization, etc.:

- *This article outlines the council's communication and **public** engagement strategy.*
- *The charity is currently recruiting for an experienced engagement **officer**.*

Meaningful Youth Engagement

Planning with youths at the heart of the service: Prescriptive vs Collaborative

Young people are involved in the process 'to construct their learning environment and experience' (Joselowsky, 2007)

Joselowsky, F. (2007). Youth Engagement, High School Reform, and Improved Learning Outcomes: Building Systemic Approaches for Youth Engagement. NASSP Bulletin, 91(3), 257-276. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192636507306133

Meaningful engagement allows individuals to:

Think and act independently and with agency

Create their own individual meaning and purpose

Understand how one's tasks fit into a bigger picture

Conger, J., & Kanungo, R. (1988). The Empowerment Process: Integrating Theory and Practice. The Academy of Management Review, 13(3), 471–482. doi:10.2307/258093

Ingredients for Meaningful Engagement

Relationships

Fostering positive Young Persons - Adult relationships is the pretext for meaningful engagement

Intentionality

Putting our mind and heart to have meaningful engagements fosters a good outcome

Communication

Two-way conversations help to consider the young persons in our policy and programme design

Case Study: Engagement through vocational interest

Design Thinking

At the heart of Design Thinking is the intention to **improve products by analyzing how users interact with them** and investigating the conditions in which they operate.

Design Thinking offers us a means of digging that bit deeper to uncover ways of improving user experiences **by understanding user needs and wants**.

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Design Thinking

Define

Prototype

Empathise

Ideate

Test

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Adolescent Centricity

In our conceptualization, the consideration of the adolescent needs and wants are key and crucial in delivering an effective programme/policy

Seeking data points by engaging with different partners for greater understanding

Utilising a multi-modal medium of service design and delivery for greater participation

Persona of Youth

Family Circumstances

Inadequate adult/parental supervision and/or discipline

Poor relationship with parents, neglectful/absent parenting

Beyond parental control, youth tends not to comply to rules

Inappropriate discipline, family violence/abuse

Poor spousal relationship

Family history of offences/ financial problems

Education/Employment

Not meaningfully engaged in school/employment

Low achievement in school

High absenteeism/

School drop out

Disruptive school behaviour

Poor relationship with teachers/peers (e.g. bully victim)

Peer Relations

Strained peer relations

Association with delinquent peers

Engage in delinquent activities with peers

Sexually active with romantic partners

Early dating/ Multiple romantic partners

Leisure Activities

Limited organised activities

No hobbies/ interests

Spent most of time on vices or social media/gaming

Uninterested in complying to structured programmes

What motivates youths?

- Feeling connectedness to a relationship/ larger community
- Being recognised and affirmed for their skills/talents/strengths
- Source of income/sustenance
- Platform to be heard, freedom of choice, freedom of expression

What is their perfect school?

- Lesser restrictive school rules, more freedom to explore and express themselves
- Able to learn their choice of interests, topics
- Able to create their own curriculum, research on their choice of topics
- Having unstructured time for learning from each other, as compared to fixed timetables
- Hands-on activities and out-of-classroom experiential learning
- Opportunities to experience various vocational pathways
- One-to-one time with mentor for emotional support or planning towards career pathway

Why aren't youths doing what they want to do/ their aspirations?

- Restricted by fixed educational system and pathway
- Lack of opportunities. Opportunities largely are given based on merit, meritocracy-driven nation
- Innovation and free expression not encouraged in local school setting
- Lack of relevant knowledge and skills, vocational skills not taught in mainstream school
- Lack of resources and support e.g finances, space, time,
- Lack of confidence, ideas/dreams being rejected and undermined by Asian parents/teachers

What skills do out-of-school youths have/ are keen to learn?

- Hands-on skills e.g. building/carpentry, fixing, repairing of scooters/bikes
- Information Technology skills e.g. IT web design, computer programming, gaming, YouTubing, managing social media
- Creative/Design skills e.g. art and craft, designing, floristry, D&T, photography, animation, illustration, graffiti
- Lifestyle skills e.g. culinary, baking, sewing, barista
- Serving skills e.g. customer service, waitressing, coffee-making, hospitality, retail
- People skills e.g. sales, motivational speaker, emceeing, mentoring, coaching
- Athletic skills e.g. cycling, running, soccer, swimming, dancing, basketball
- Musical skills e.g. piano, singing, song writing, guitar, violin etc.
- Entrepreneurship skills e.g. start-up ideas, innovation, business mindset, identifying social needs or a society lack

What makes a young person want to fix bicycles/peddle bicycles for seniors?

- If youths are keen on learning hands-on skills e.g. fixing/repairing work or athletic skills e.g. cycling
- If youths believe in the social cause of helping seniors/ if youths find meaning in the work
- If youths feel validated about their ability to contribute to the cause
- If youths are keen to earn an income, and if income is provided
- If youths are keen to gain new experiences
- If youths find relational connectedness with other peers, mentors or seniors in the programme e.g. able to look up to a mentor or learn from a senior

Inter Organizational Collaboration

Senior Mentors

In summary...

Adolescent at the heart of everything

Consult different partners for data points

Communicate and take into account- adolescent needs

Relationships are crucial and important

To be intentional in every interaction with our young persons

To be attuned, adapt to changes and adjust to needs