



ECO-MEDIA

Module: Engagement of Young People

Lesson 1: An introduction to meaningful youth engagement

Project Number

2021-1-ES01-KA220-ADU-000026310



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.
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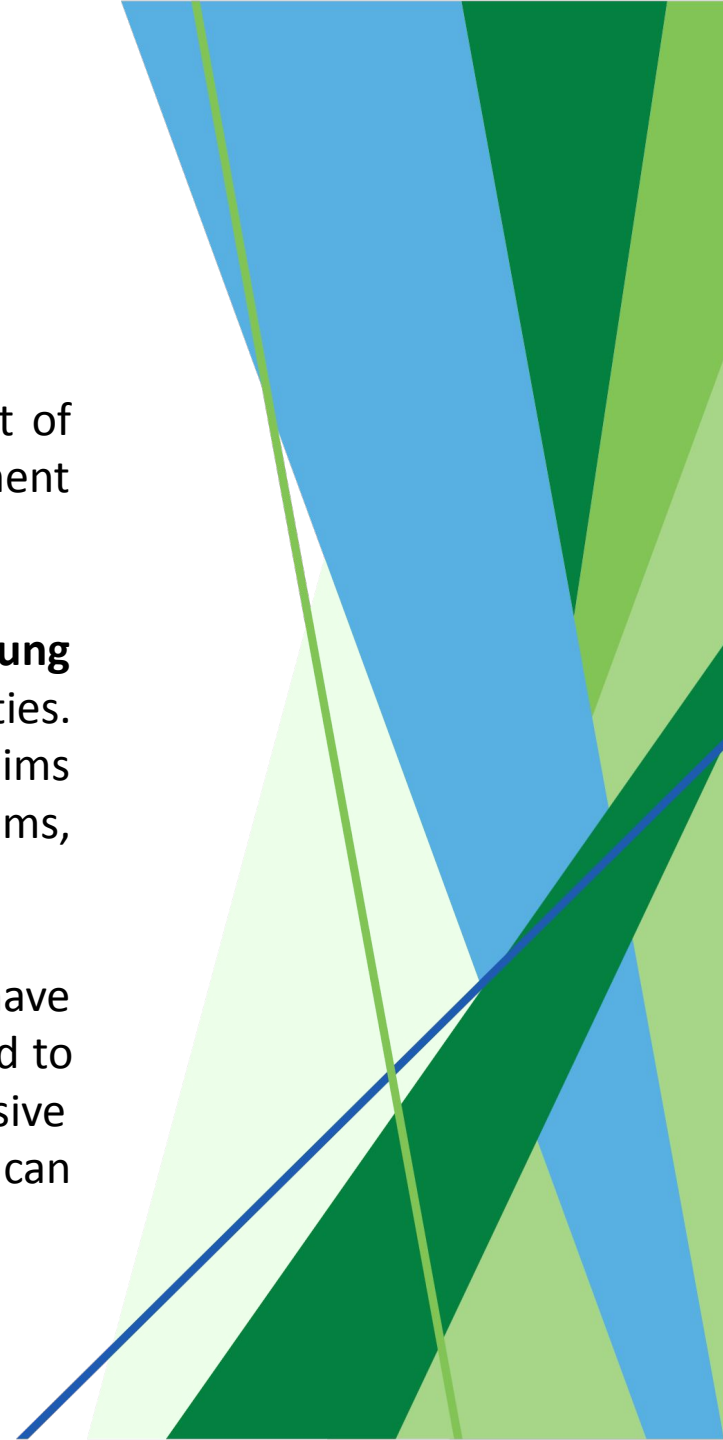


Lesson 1 aims

In Lesson 1, the definition of youth engagement will be introduced in the context of youth work, and further elaborated in terms of the types of effective engagement practices that can be established and utilized by youth workers.

Meaningful **youth engagement** refers to the **active and inclusive participation of young people** in decision-making processes that affect their lives, communities, and societies. It goes beyond simply involving young people in tokenistic or superficial ways and aims to empower them as valued contributors and partners in shaping policies, programs, and initiatives.

The concept of meaningful youth engagement recognizes that young people have unique perspectives, experiences, and expertise that can enrich discussions and lead to **more effective outcomes**. It acknowledges that young people are not just passive recipients of decisions made on their behalf, but capable agents of change who can actively contribute to finding solutions to the challenges they face.



Youth engagement and youth work

Youth Engagement Defined:

Youth engagement; when young people are involved in responsible, challenging actions to create positive social change.

This means involving youth in planning and in making decisions that affect themselves and others.

Youth engagement also occurs in **youth-adult partnerships** that are structured in a way that both groups contribute, teach, and learn from each other.



Youth engagement and youth work

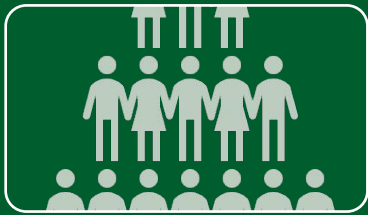
Importance of Youth Engagement:

Youth engagement is a central **principle of youth development**. According to the ecological perspective of human development, young people are agents of their own development. Youth are more than passive recipients of external influences; they are actively involved in shaping their development by interacting with people and opportunities made available within their environments. Through youth engagement, communities can do a better job of creating the **services, opportunities, and supports** that young people need to develop in healthy ways. Youth engagement offers community leaders the expertise and partnership of young people, helping adults fully understand what it is like to grow up in a rapidly changing world. From a political point of view, youth engagement is important because young people deserve the right to represent their own interests. Youth civic engagement is also critically important to prepare young people to be active citizens in a democracy.



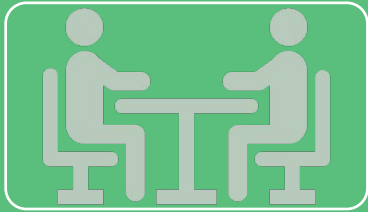
Youth engagement and youth work

Here are some key principles and components of meaningful youth engagement:



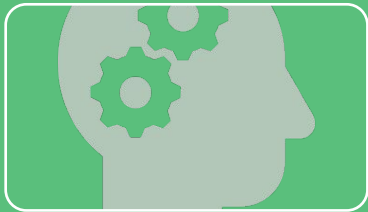
Inclusivity

- Meaningful youth engagement seeks to include young people from diverse backgrounds, including different genders, cultures, abilities, and socioeconomic statuses. It aims to create an inclusive space where all voices are heard and respected.



Participation

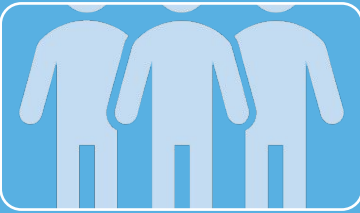
- It involves young people as active participants rather than passive observers. This includes involving them in all stages of decision-making processes, such as planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.



Empowerment

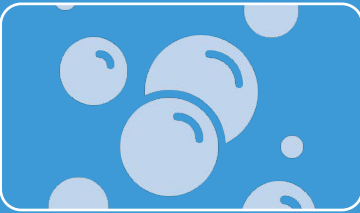
- Meaningful youth engagement empowers young people by providing them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to participate effectively. It promotes leadership development, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities among youth.

Youth engagement and youth work



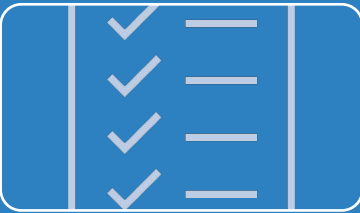
Collaboration

- It emphasizes collaboration and partnerships between young people, adult allies, policymakers, and organizations. It recognizes the importance of intergenerational dialogue and cooperation in creating sustainable and impactful change.



Respect for diversity of opinion

- Meaningful youth engagement values and respects different perspectives and encourages open dialogue. It fosters an environment where young people feel comfortable expressing their opinions, even if they differ from others.



Accountability

- It involves holding decision-makers accountable for their commitments to youth engagement. This includes ensuring that young people's contributions are taken seriously, their voices are genuinely considered, and their feedback is acted upon.

Types of youth engagement practices

The degree of youth engagement depends on the context and the nature of the work undertaken within a project or programme. One degree may be more applicable than the others.



Types of youth engagement practices





Control over outcome:
The above enables youth to influence process and outcomes, without having direct control.

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Control over outcome:
Partnership enables youth to influence, challenge and engage with both the process and the outcome.

Control over outcome:
Youth identify the issues of concern and control the process and outcomes.

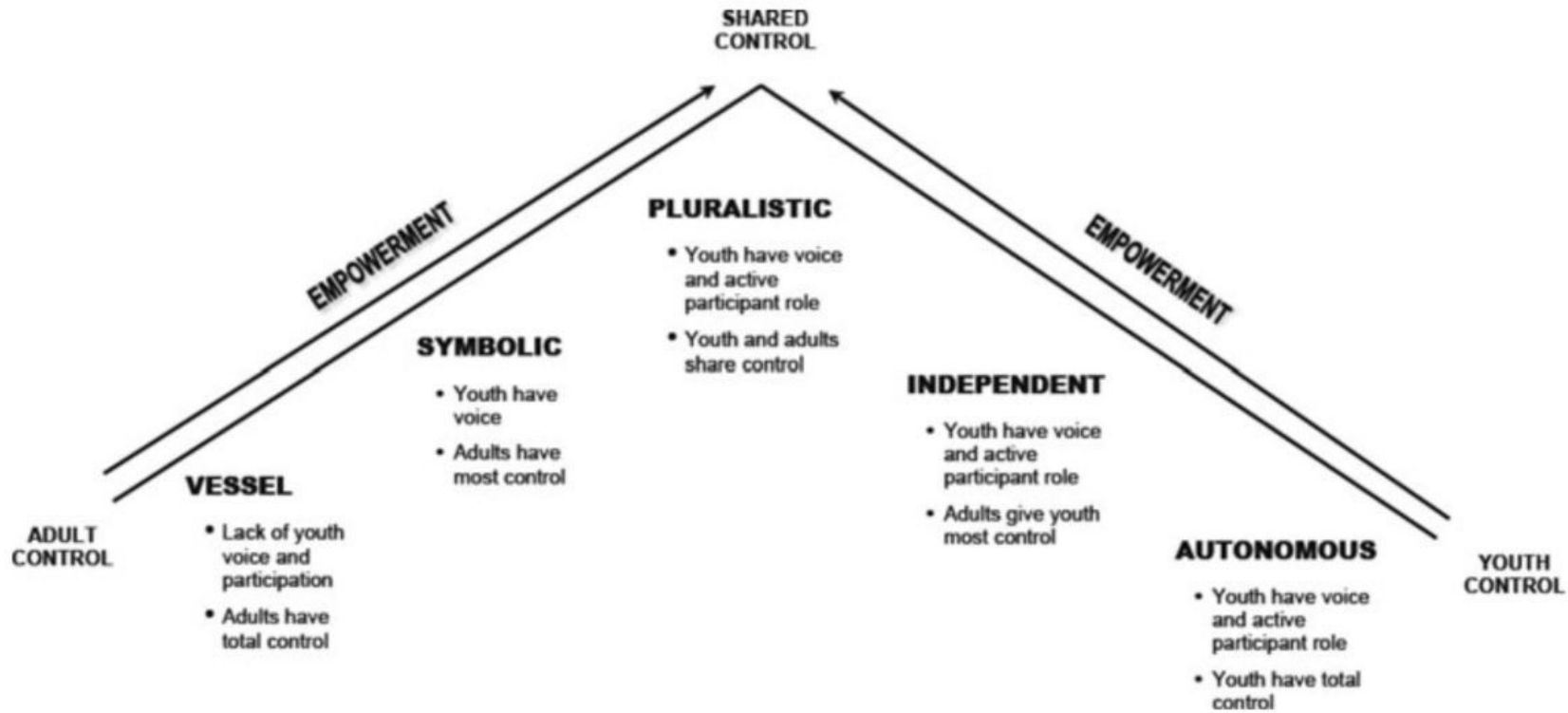
Note that youth consultation can be considered a type of youth contribution. However, the latter cannot be reduced to consultation only and can include other types of contributions by young people, such as designing or implementing a specific aspect of a project or programme.

Note that all initiatives or activities in which youth are the beneficiaries or that primarily concern youth should aim for youth as partners/leaders in the process in order to avoid tokenism or manipulation.

Note that the Agency plays the role of a facilitator, enabling youth to pursue their goals within programmatic objectives. To do this the Agency can give advice and backstop, provide spaces, give information, reinforce capacities, or establish links with other stakeholders.



Youth workers ability to make youth engagement meaningful



Youth workers ability to make youth engagement meaningful

	DO	DON'T
SAFE	Ensure the physical and emotional security of the youth engaged. Always follow national or organizational safeguarding procedures as well as child protection rights and responsibilities for youth under the age of 18.	Assume all youth are safe and free to express themselves when the circumstance and context of their contributions could be politically or culturally sensitive
RESPECTFUL	Respect youth as contributors, innovators and knowledge-holders on the basis of their perspectives and experiences.	Request youth to engage when their contribution is likely to remain unheard or manipulate their responses to align with a predefined agenda.
VALUED	Value youth capacities and contributions as you value those of adults. Encourage youth to express views and ideas freely.	Presume that youth inputs are less valuable than those of others and undermine them on the basis of age.
INCLUSIVE	<p>Provide equal opportunities for all, regardless of cultural and social backgrounds, education, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, context, political and economic status, or other characteristics. Provide opportunities for traditionally underserved youth to engage, including those not members of any structures.</p> <p>Where relevant, encourage engaged youth to self-organize in inclusive, democratic structures that are informed by diverse views and experiences.</p>	<p>Only engage youth from well-represented groups.</p> <p>Only engage youth who are already well-known to the Agency.</p> <p>Assume that the views of one or few young people are representative of all youth in a similar situation or youth more broadly introduced to your Agency.</p>

**Any questions?
Thank you!**



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