

Chapter 4

The Youth Mainstreaming Enablers Framework

This chapter:

- introduces the Youth Mainstreaming Enablers Framework, which helps us contextualise youth mainstreaming in the specific policy and institutional contexts we work in
- provides a concrete analysis of a context in education that enables discussion of the framework in a real-life setting.

4.1 Introducing the Youth Mainstreaming Enablers Framework

Outcomes for young people's wellbeing and rights are determined by enablers at several levels. Youth mainstreaming, in other words, occurs not in a vacuum, but within societal, institutional, policy and legal contexts that are relevant internationally and nationally. The commitments to structural transformation and partnerships for change addressed in *Agenda 2030*¹ need critical analysis of this big picture, along with pragmatic action.

Figure 4.1 (hereafter called 'the Enablers Framework') looks at some key enablers for youth mainstreaming. It helps us approach youth mainstreaming holistically in the context of societal (cultural norms), structural (formal/institutional) and organisational contexts. This discussion will help policy-makers situate youth mainstreaming in their respective contexts, including designing realistic plans for YM. This is elaborated on in Box 4.1.

In terms of our 'control' of the factors indicated in Figure 4.1, we would have greater control over organisational enablers than structural enablers. However, where structural enablers do not exist, or are not optimal, we can identify areas for long-term research and advocacy to influence donors and international banks, international conventions and legislation, and so on.

Box 4.1 Societal, structural and organisational enablers for YM

Societal factors: Social norms influence our engagement with youth, including all subgroups. What is their status in society? Are they seen as equal partners in the private and public domains?

Structural (macro) factors: Global to subnational social and economic policy systems/enablers influence organisational ability to implement youth mainstreaming effectively. This includes the way in which aspirational goals set by human rights conventions are translated (or not) into policy and programmes, or the broader way in which government and governance, including legislation and donor policy, are organised globally, nationally and locally.

Structural (meso) factors: This involves the more specific pre-planning political and investment commitments to youth mainstreaming, in terms of the direction of political will and public/donor spending towards youth mainstreaming, and a strong and facilitative youth sector.

Organisational factors: Youth-friendly, democratic organisational structures and processes are critical for effective youth mainstreaming. This enabler refers to these characteristics.

Box 4.2 How youth mainstreaming enablers/disablers influence the right to education

What are the enablers that influence 'mainstreaming youth' in an already predominantly 'youth-serving' sector such as secondary and tertiary education within the context of prevailing education and economic models? What are the societal, macro (global/national) policy and institutional imperatives that determine youth-centric education planning?

Recent developments throughout the world, in both the global North and South, have seen tensions between youth aspirations and education planning.² Cuts in spending for public education, for example, have meant that the lives of poorer and marginalised young people growing up now are far less hopeful than those who grew up ten years ago in terms of social and education mobility – be it in the developed or the developing world, with shortfalls even greater for developing world youth. This situation places considerable strain on achieving the aspirational goal of a right to education, as set out in the UDHR and UNCRC, and reaching SDG targets on education.

In some countries, where university tuition fees have increased dramatically and student loan facilities have been either scrapped or reduced, lower middle-class and poor students are finding it increasingly difficult to achieve their academic aspirations.

Student movements globally have highlighted the effects of the increased education cost burden placed on young people, and all young people's right to accessible education, including calls for racial and economic equality. Such

(Continued)

Box 4.2 How youth mainstreaming enablers/disablers influence the right to education (*cont.*)

movements often ask for an expenditure floor for education spending and accessible education as a human right. Often, student movements in one country have affected the growth of movements in others.

This lobby has also been prominent in countries that have exemplary, free tertiary education programmes, which are in danger of erosion in the long term because of policies that favour diversifying education providers beyond state providers, often without sufficient regulatory mechanisms for quality and cost.

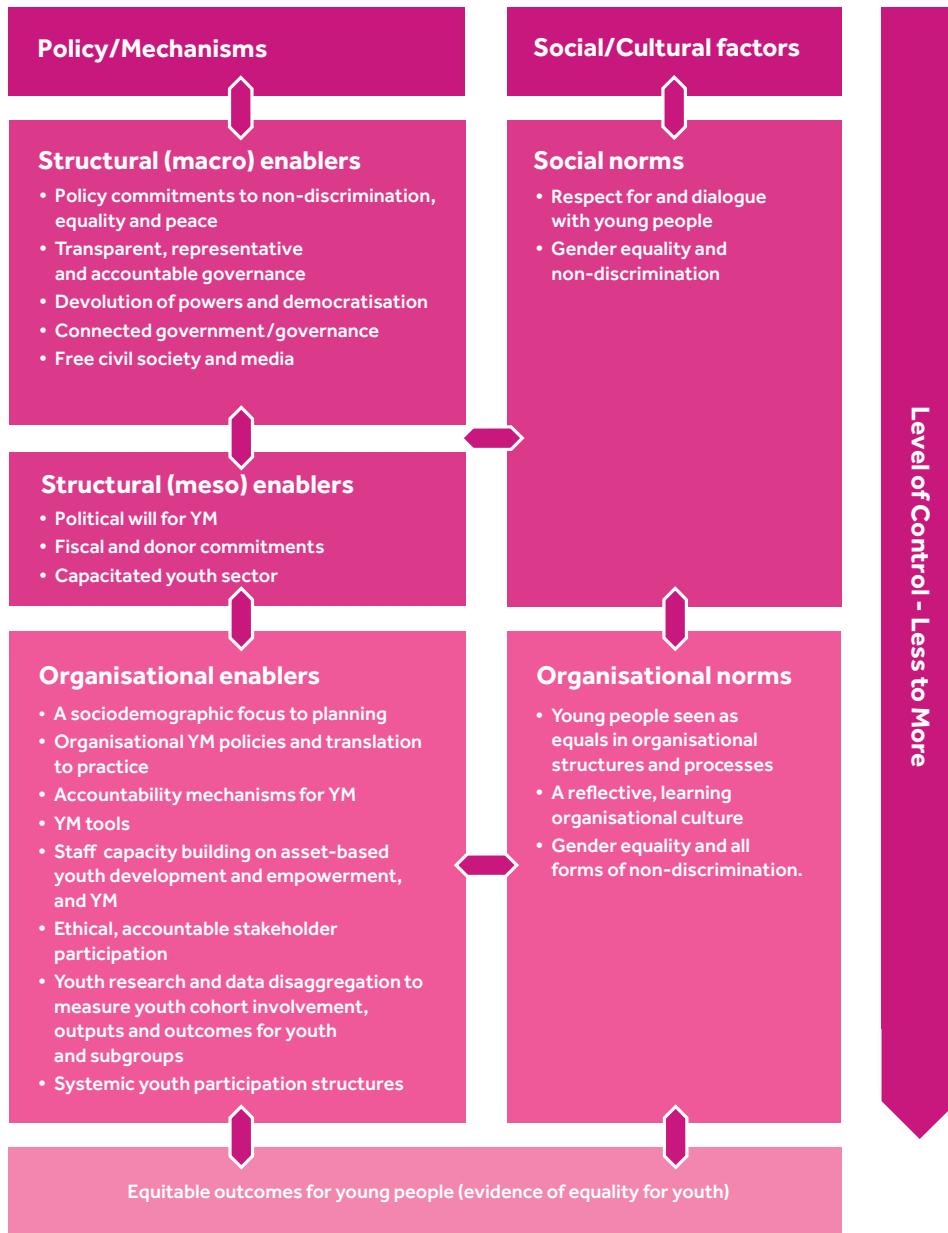
In all these circumstances, while short-term measures have been put in place to redress the effects of spending cuts on young people themselves, successes have been limited. This is because of inadequate collaborative dialogue and political commitments, but also the broader economic, political and financing models which shape these policies, and which are often beyond the control of single governments. Meanwhile, in the context of rising income inequalities throughout the world, more and more young people are caught up in poverty and are unable to meet the financial demands of education – now increasingly transferred to families.

Analysis through the lens of the Enablers Framework, inequality and youth empowerment, shows us that:

- Increasing pressures on governments to cut public spending (macro-policy – global)
- Result in cuts in the most vital sectors such as education (macro-policy – national)
- Therefore affecting poorer and marginalised young people's right to education (access to services)
- In this way exacerbating social inequality based on race, class and so on (inequity)
- Resulting in student action (youth participation)
- Which, in turn, often creates tensions between education institutions and students, and violent backlashes by police and universities (negative organisational response)
- Along with negative attitudes towards young people's agency and participative actions by society (intergenerational attitudes and class relations)
- And the labelling of young people as those 'wanting everything for free' (a deficit lens), without a full comprehension of the context of their aspirations, life challenges and frustrations

Such analysis can provide indications of where financial, institutional, social, political and economic barriers or enablers of education attainment can be identified and addressed.³ It particularly highlights the need to work with young people as partners in education planning; to ensure co-operation and shared decision-making between students and education decision-makers in both the public and private sectors; to protect the vision of Education for All; and to deliver optimally for youth.

Figure 4.1 The Youth Mainstreaming Enablers Framework



This indicates that YM is gradual and ever-changing, and can build on strengths across time; it can in fact change face during different social, political and economic cycles of a nation/the world. YM, in other words, never ‘works itself out of a job’.

Box 4.2 examines the implications of such a framework for a real-life example of young people’s right to education.



Box 4.3 Reflections on Chapter 4: The Youth Mainstreaming Enablers Framework

- What are the enabling factors in your context for YM at the societal, structural and organisational levels?
- What are the challenges to effective youth mainstreaming and how can these be overcome?
- What are the short-term, medium-term and long-term actions required?

4.2 Conclusions

Before beginning a youth mainstreaming process in your country, it is important to assess how realistic your YM plans are by examining the context in which you operate. The Enablers Framework will help you do this.

Notes

- 1 United Nations 2015.
- 2 See, for example, Giroux 2014.
- 3 See also Thorat 2011.

References

- Giroux, HA. (2014), *Neo-Liberalism's War on Higher Education*, Haymarket Books, Chicago.
- Thorat, A. (2011), 'Private Education for the Poor in India', *Commonwealth Education Partnerships 2011/12*, Nexus Strategic Partnerships, Cambridge, 24–26.
- United Nations (2015), *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, UN Resolution of the General Assembly, A/RES/70/1, United Nations, New York.

