Power - Provocation Paper

Introduction

Power is one of the key factors in transforming the education system. Power can come through various means - from the top-down, from policymakers, through funding, or can be built from the bottom-up by people coming together and getting organized. We need power to make sure the right changes can be done by the right people at the right time. Without power, the beneficiaries of the education system will not be able to gain adequate support to fulfill their needs to flourish - be it students, teachers or school leaders. But what is power? Who has power? How do we ensure people who need it, have it?

Story

In the UK, a campaigning organization called Citizens UK discovered that migrant children have to pay more than £1,000 to apply for permanent settlement in the UK. They began a campaign to get stateless children citizenships in the UK, which culminated in a child-led poetry recital by 200 children outside of the UK's Home Office. This garnered attention from the UK's Immigration Minister, who invited them to a meeting. Citizens UK then presented their case in their meeting with the Immigration Minister, who has the legislative power to change this law. After a fruitful meeting, in which the Immigration Minister said she agreed with their campaign, the Minister said that she actually could not help them, unless there was greater political support. She asked them to lobby 20 other MPs from her party to support this case in the parliament for a change in policy. The lesson gained from this is that despite growing bottom-up power through a grassroots campaign, and convincing the ultimate decision-maker, even more political power is needed to truly enact change.

In India, Indus Action, a policy implementation organization in India, discovered a loophole in the online admission to higher institutions in India where it affects the gender balance of the admission rate. The organization realized that for every 100 applications submitted by the male applicants, only 70 female applicants submitted theirs. They negotiated with the Indian government to ensure an equitable share of application for boys and girls in India by considering gender equity when writing the entry algorithm.

Perspectives

The quotes below explore the concept, role and impact of power in affecting change in the education system. The link to the conversation is here and the passcode is &c!#LtD7. For more quotes, refer here.

Who?	When?	What?
James Asfa, Citizens UK	00:26:16 - 00:22:35	The key metrics of power come down to organized people and organized money. And I think that a lot of the approach that we take when we organizing.. That is how we organize people in such a way that gives us enough strength and power that we actually can leverage change".
Darlin Ibarguen, Auckland University	00:33:51 - 00:34:14	There's a Colombian saying that people are superior to their political leaders. The power is in the hands of people. We need to create that level of trust to build a different narrative for those who have been left behind.

Who?	When?	What?
Tarun Cheurkuri, Indus Action	00:39:38 - 00:40:03	The strength comes from the communities who organize because we work on aggregating grievances from within communities, and we do a bit of translating work by building community champions and then negotiate with counselors and the ministers and the bureaucrats. That is at least a section of power in an organization.
James Asfa, Citizens UK	00:46:06 - 00:46:22	It's a mixture of the bottom up and top down strategies. The bottom up strategy is about listening to the people impacted by the issue on what they want to change. The top down strategy is on how you deploy resources to get the leverage that you need.
Darlin Ibarguen, Auckland University	01:02:00 - 01:03:03	The traditional way of schooling has diminished the indigenous and traditional knowledge within our society. This mostly comes from colonial perspectives where it has the right to say what is valuable for our society. The way to challenge this is to realise education as a tool of liberation and not to continue perpetuating oppression.
James Asfa, Citizens UK	01:05:42 - 01:06:00	It is important to pay attention to power because the status quo is about power dynamics and it is stable. When we change that, it's shifting the power of people who are secluded from decision making.
Tarun Cheurkuri, Indus Action	01:11:20 - 01:11:40	Another proxy is on who holds power in terms of distribution of resources. If you focus on a particular set of policy, following the money means to see what the budget allocation is.

Evidence

System Innovation Initiative by ROCKWOOL Foundation has identified power as one of the four keys to unlock system innovation, alongside purpose, relationships and resources flow. Power, relationships and resources flow are interdependent in locking a system to serve a purpose which is harder to challenge.

Flor Avelino wrote a paper to discuss the concept of power in processes of change and innovation. The paper discussed seven points of contestation on power which are 'power over versus power to', 'centred versus diffused', 'consensual versus conflictual', 'constraining versus enabling', 'quantity versus quality', 'empowerment versus disempowerment' and 'power in relation to knowledge'.

Beyond theory, power in action can be seen when we expand voice and agency by ensuring the invested stakeholders to make confident decisions about learning and education. New Education Story emphasizes the importance of collaborative culture and learner's agency in seeing the world in different perspectives to move innovation beyond the level of individual and classroom. This can be

done by encouraging different stakeholders to take part in decision making on education transformation and to avoid reinforcing existing inequalities. To do this, organizing can be one of the ways to include students, parents, and communities to get together to seek and act on change. Dr Marshall Ganz of Harvard University introduces five key practices to organizing to enact power and make intended impact which are telling stories, building relationships, structuring teams, strategizing, and acting. The "Public Narrative", a framework codified by Dr Ganz, is based on research done on community organizing and social movements in the US.
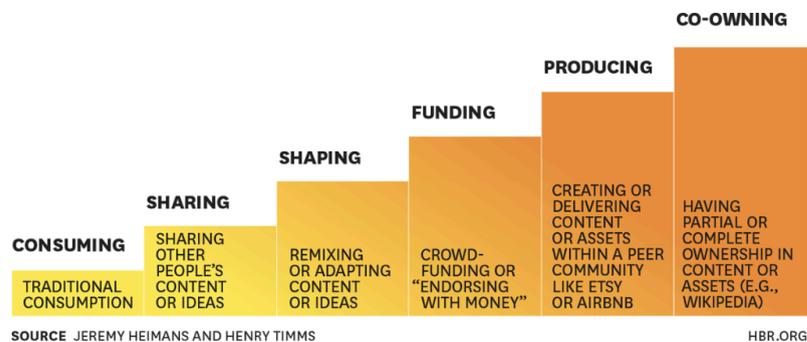
Community organizing is a form of new power as it is open, peer driven, distributive, and participatory. New power model, according to Jeremy Heimans and Henry Timms, is as in the chart.

In exploring the role of power in affecting change, Global Education Monitoring Report for 2021 unpacks the role of non-state actors in the education ecosystem, where it is reported that they have the power to influence education policy and public opinion in expense of their political views and economic interests through tools such as advocacy, network lobbying, research and funding. In the case of new power, it acts as an influence that is built upon the relationship between interests and resources.

The Participation Scale

New power gains its force from people's growing capacity—and desire—to go far beyond passive consumption of ideas and goods.

CO-OWNING HAVING PARTIAL OR COMPLETE OWNERSHIP IN CONTENT OR ASSETS (E.G., WIKIPEDIA)

PRODUCING CREATING OR DELIVERING CONTENT OR ASSETS WITHIN A PEER COMMUNITY LIKE ETSY OR AIRBNB

FUNDING CROWD-FUNDING OR "ENDORSING WITH MONEY"

SHAPING REMIXING OR ADAPTING CONTENT OR IDEAS

SHARING SHARING OTHER PEOPLE'S CONTENT OR IDEAS

CONSUMING TRADITIONAL CONSUMPTION

SOURCE JEREMY HEIMANS AND HENRY TIMMS   HBR.ORG

Examples

Within and beyond the network, people and organizations are using power in different ways to bring about change. For example:

- In Portugal, leaders encouraged parents to organize local seminars on education reform, with full autonomy to choose the topics and attendees. Government representatives were sent to explain and debate reform, rationales and articulate how they would incorporate seminar learnings back into the reform plans.

- In Estonia, the schools, especially the school principals, exercise their agency in deciding student learning experiences, school management and operation and community engagement activities.

- In Indonesia, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology initiated a program called 'Guru Penggerak' or Teacher Drive to cultivate Indonesian teachers' interest and skills to be education activists or to hold leadership positions

- In Sierra Leone, a community-based Mother's Club supports vulnerable children back to school due to endemic diseases such as Ebola and pandemic by using their profits from gardening and arts and craft production.

- In Haiti, Paraguay and Argentina, The Sholas Foundation builds a program model that centers on student voice that emphasizes agency and empowerment by gathering students from diverse socioeconomic status and involving the schools and the surrounding communities.

- In Navajo, the DEAP school empowers the children of the Navajo nation by [examining the injustices they face collectively and recognizing their strengths and resilience](#) by analyzing their situation and transforming their communities using cultural, vocational, and academic skills.
- In Baltimore, [The Intersection of Change](#) is a community-based non profit who works with [low-income students to recognize their potential as leaders of social change](#) through various programs and services in addressing poverty in their locality.

Insights

How do we shift the system using power?

There are two sources of power - organized people and organized money. Collective voices and resources are an influential tool to transform the education system that can only happen when people and money are organized effectively to affect the change they want to see and channel the impact to the intended beneficiaries. This can be done either through legislative power, financing, a shared commitment to change, or the organizing of students, parents and teachers.

You need an alignment of bottom-up and top-down power to bring about lasting change. Top-down power without community involvement fails to bring about lasting behavioral change. Grassroots organizing without political and financial power fails to bring about legislative or structural change. You need both at the same time.

How do we use power to amplify change we want to see?

We must seek to build power with, not over. Having a collective commitment from all stakeholders within the education ecosystem will sustain and scale the transformative change in individuals, schools, districts or regions, and will encourage others to follow suit which can amplify the change in various locations, contexts, demographics. You get to change the power you have to compel.

Make space for the groups with most needs, but less power to be part of the decision making process and channel the resources accordingly. We must include minority voices in planning and implementing change as they are often the beneficiaries. This can be female students, children from the marginalized communities, stateless children or refugees. Their participation in the intended change will make the education transformation be more meaningful, effective and lasting.

Questions / What's next?

As a non-profit organization who strives to advocate the best for our children globally, how do we exercise our own power in streamlining and determining non-state actors to work in partnership with, without compromising our values and integrity? The adoption or adaptation of education or social policy that we use in framing our decisions or thoughts in voicing for injustice needs to consider inclusion in diversity - do we include the perspectives of minorities or examples from the Global South?

How do we push the higher rank authority to be transparent with data and their decision making process so that we are able to bridge the gap that exists within the education system so that we can affect change efficiently and successfully? Sex-aggregated data is needed to ensure we can identify levels within the education system and key players that have the power of influence to enact change for better access to opportunities and quality to education

A conversation of main priorities that we should collectively pursue for an efficient education ecosystem globally or regionally will determine the ways we organize people and resources to plan and speed up the process - referring to the four keys of system innovation.

Useful Links

- *Community Impact Conversation: full call recording*
- *Regional research documents*
- *Global learning series website*
- *Case studies of community impact FY21*