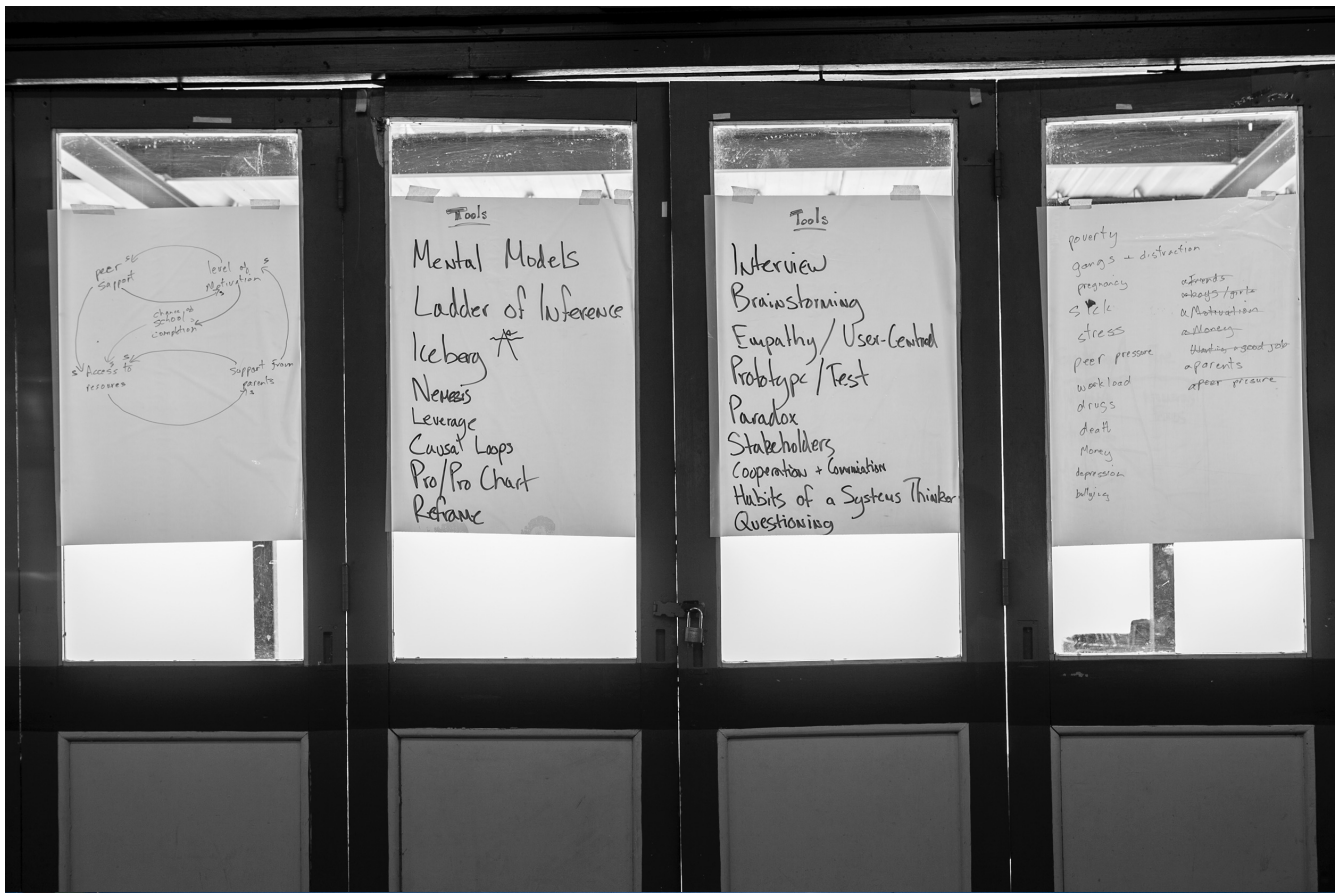




Agents of Change Report

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Agents of Change Report

Executive Summary

The Big Ideas Summer Studio is pilot educational programme designed to create a learning environment that challenges participants to sit at the intersection of Learning, Strategic Thinking, Leadership, Innovation, Sustainability and Problem Solving. Participants are lead through a five day intensive learning module and coached through a two day intense period of designing and planning or charrette. In the charrette participants are challenged to apply concepts, skills and tools form the learning module to a real-world case study. Participants are challenged to design, prototype, and evaluate the solutions. On the final day participants present their solutions to the stakeholder they have been solving for.

Having entered into its third year, the projects, has worked with 57 youth, trained 47 educators, and worked with 7 camp counsellors. The eventual goal is to provide participants with skills that allow them to be citizens who have thought-provoking dialogue, an increased capacity for in-depth synthesis or critical thinking and have access to a library of tools and techniques that allow them to be better problem-solvers.



Moving forward the programmes biggest challenges are going to be:

- finding ways to scale, while maintaining its current quality
- developing a model that improves financial sustainability
- making the programme year round, versus one-off summer workshops
- training more facilitators who can implement the programme
- improving the processes of participant recruitment
- securing funding for impact evaluation or continuous evaluation.

Introduction

This report seeks to provide an overview of the Big Ideas Summer Studio experience for 2014. In August of 2014, we embarked on delivering a youth programme targeted at 20 participants between the ages of 13-16. For the first time we included a problem that a NonProfit organisation was facing. The organisation, Habitat for Humanity Trinidad and Tobago, presented participants with some of the problems they were facing. Using the frameworks and tools provided in the learning module participants were able to design, develop and deliver innovative solutions for Habitat for Humanity Trinidad and Tobago. The following report will provide a overview of the project, along with recognised areas for improvement. It will also outline projections and suggestions for growth over the next year and beyond.



Focus of the Big Ideas Summer Studio

The Big Ideas Summer Studio is an ambitious educational programme that encourages participants to sit at the uncomfortable intersection of Learning, Strategic Thinking, Leadership, Innovation, Sustainability, and Problem Solving. The programme is divided into two phases. In phase one, participants are lead through a five day intensive learning module where they are introduced to concepts like Systems Thinking, Design Thinking, Integrative Thinking and various approaches to pragmatic inquiry.

In phase two of the programme, participants are coached through a charrette. A charette is an intense period of designing and planning usually used in the discipline of architecture. In the charrette, participants are challenged to apply concepts, skills and tools form the learning module to a real-world case study or problem. In being introduced to a case, participants are coached through a two day process of designing, prototyping, evaluating and rethinking potential solutions to the proposed problem case. On the final day of formal learning sessions, participants present their solutions to the stakeholder they have been solving for. The programme usually ends with a field trip that is usually involves Art + Sustainability.

The studio is designed to provide participants with tools and techniques for thinking and problem solving. We provide participants with as much information as possible so they feel empowered to share or teach the tools and techniques taught throughout the programme. One of the objectives of the project, is to create a community of problem solvers, thinkers and peer educators.

Programme Outcomes

Year	Students Impacted	Tutors Trained	Camp Counselors Trained
1	18	2	0
2	20	47	3
3	18		5

Programme Outcomes for the Big Idea Summer Studio

The objective of the Big Ideas Summer Studio is to provide participants with the tools and techniques for finding innovative solutions to everyday problems. The programme is designed to provide participants with the starting kit for problem solving. At the end of the programme, participants should feel comfortable that they know how to understand, access and analyse problems so that they can propose potential solutions.

A secondary objective of the programme is to build a community of young people who can support each other as they navigate the inevitable challenges that life will throw at them. The goal is that these participants will be able to connect beyond the studio so that they can act as their own community of thinkers and problem solvers.

Participants who participated in past programmes have reported:

- increased academic engagement
- improved aptitude for managing conflict with peers and family
- greater capacity to empathise with people whose opinions differ from their own
- being able to make better decisions as they can now think through and articulate short-term and long-term consequences of potential actions
- improvements in being able to articulate or identify problems and articulate potential solutions
- that they no longer see the world as competitive and can identify moments for collaboration where previously they would have chosen to compete with peers
- an increased capacity to deal with uncertainty, conflict and opposing models
- knowing that all models are incomplete, imperfect and can be improved provide participants with a considerable sense of comfort in knowing that they do not always need to know the answer

Areas for improvement

- More targeted marketing to ensure increased attendance
- Using past participants as advocates and marketers for future programmes.
- Need to develop continuous learning sessions so participants can increase chances of applying tools in the classroom.
- Greater clarity on teaching outcomes for facilitators to ensure that objectives are met
- More time spent on developing printed learning materials that are developed specifically for the studio
- Need to improve on post-camp communication with participants in an attempt to build a learning/sharing community and leverage participants for use in future camps/workshops. Need to have frequent meetings, outings or events with participants
- Explore options for local case studies/examples for use within teaching curriculum
- Need to develop better metrics or mechanism for determining the short, medium and long term impact of the programme.
- Increased emphasis on follow up evaluation with participants.
- Regular meetings with Trainers and facilitators as a way of continuing to increase our capacity.

Conclusions

In its third year and after several iterations, AOC has touched the lives of 108 persons. From the 2012 camp we have had 2 successful mentoring situations. Additionally 3 boys from 2012 camp chose to give up 2 weeks of their vacation to participate in the “Train the Trainers” Camp and serve as “Camp Counsellors” for the 2013 student camp. In 2014, 5 past participants chose to volunteer as counsellors for the program.

In preparation for 2013, Chevonne Agana, Keita Demming and Dennise Demming attended the 1-week Systems Thinking workshop hosted by the Waters Foundation in St. Louis, Missouri. Denyssa David has also joined the team after having participated in the 2013 student camp. In preparation for 2014, we hosted a one-day workshop for facilitators as a deep dive into the various methodologies.

While the feedback from participants indicate that AOC has made a significant impact on the way they see the world, we still struggle to develop rigorous metrics other than participants reports. It is difficult and expensive to access and develop baseline metrics. For now, participant reports serve as our best proxy for measuring success.

Recommendations

1. Scale up this camp to 4 per year as follows:
(2 youth camps in August targeted at 14-18 year olds),
(1 Train the Trainers aimed at Educators, July)
(1 youth camp aimed at 13-14 year olds to be held during the Easter break)
2. Top off the group size at 20 persons.
3. Continue the 9-day format.
4. Expand the facilitation team to 9.
5. Have programme graduates meet quarterly.

Challenges

1. Convincing corporate T&T of the benefit of the programme.
2. Convincing parents to pay the real cost of the camp.
3. Creating an opportunity to pilot this programme in our equivalent of k-12.
4. Training more facilitators who can implement the programme.
5. Scaling the programme while maintaining quality.
6. Determining the real impact of the programme.