Pastoral Care and Pupil Voice

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Having their say
The Research Forum for the Child was established in 2005. It has over 60 members in eleven disciplines across the university. It aims to promote high quality, inter-disciplinary research that provides a better understanding of the issues that affect children and young people in order to improve their life chances and experiences. The research conducted by the Forum:

- Encompasses the issues affecting children and young people at all stages of life from foetal development, through infancy and early childhood to young adulthood.
- Employs a wide range of research methods, but places particular emphasis on methods that promote the active participation of children and young people.
- Seeks to influence academic debates, professional practice and
Pupil Centred ‘ethic of care’
based on quality of relationship between teacher(s) and pupils(s)
Pastoral Care

Pastoral care provision will differ from school to school.

Pastoral Care provision within the school includes the way in which pupils are equipped to cope with:

- personal challenges through the curriculum on offer,
- the systems for monitoring pupils’ academic progress and wellbeing
- and the range of support available to pupils experiencing difficulties.

Pastoral care: The goose that Laid the Golden Egg?

Core value of (E)Quality relationships based on:
- Authenticity
- Empathic understanding
- Respect
(after Carl Roger’s core conditions)

And then the school improvement movement came along and sneaked off with the golden egg – pupil voice?

But ...we know...’all school staff have a responsibility for pastoral care’!!!!
Pastoral care and pupil voice...policy advice for Northern Ireland Schools on Child Protection and Every School a Good School

• all schools and colleges have a pastoral responsibility towards the children and young people in their charge, and should take all reasonable steps to ensure that their welfare is safeguarded and their safety is preserved;

• it is a child’s right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously, and to be consulted according to his/her age and understanding about the (any) proposed action.

• pastoral care is at its most effective when it is all pervasive and fully integrated into the school’s daily routines, its curriculum and its extra curricular activities.

DE Circular 2003/13
Pupil Voice: Having a voice means.....

- “having the opportunity to speak one’s mind, be heard and counted by others, and, to have an influence on outcomes”
  (Cook-Sather, 2006, p363)
Pupil voice

- Ideas of pupil participation and child-centredness have been around in education for a long time

- ‘Student Voice’ or ‘Pupil Voice’ entered education discourse in the 1990s in UK, predicated on Government concern:
  - (i) to respond positively to the UNCRC
  - (ii) about political apathy among young voters

- ‘Having a voice’ is equated with participation in liberal democratic polities and....

- In education with pupil consultation and participation in school processes (Cook-Sather, 2006).
Two inter-related processes:

• Consultation

• Participation
Consultation as directly talking with pupils about things that matter to them, listening to their views and taking these into account and responding.

Participation as opportunities for engagement in learning and assessment processes, including decision-making with a view to greater autonomy as a learner.

A way of thinking about consultation and participation

Consultation

Participation

Active citizen

Schools

Classrooms

Autonomous learner in social context

Leitch et al, 2007
Driving forces for pupil voice

• (i) school improvement movement
• (ii) international progress on children’s rights
(i) Pupil Voice and school improvement

• Accumulating evidence on ‘Educational benefits’ of consulting pupils about teaching and learning:

• Research has found that consulting pupils about teaching and learning leads to pupils:
  
  • feeling more positive about school
  • strengthens their self-esteem
  • a stronger sense of self-as-a-learner
  • ...and enhanced levels of attainment

• Rudduck et al (2005) etc  www.consultingpupils.co.uk
Pupil Voice and performance outcomes: international evidence

• Where students given a voice, they perform at or above peers in standardised tests (eg USA, Serriere, Mitra et al, 2010)

• Studies in Norway claim to have established causal pathways between variables such as democratic participation, pupil well-being and learning in mathematics, science and language development (Davies & Kirkpatrick, 2000)

• And Finland, with its place on the lofty heights of PISA, is considered to have high levels of pupil participation both at school, regional and national levels.
So Pupil Voice in Northern Ireland...

‘Pupil voice’ has been brought into the policy conversation as a means of achieving school improvement and higher standards of attainment, rather than simply as a matter of the UNCRC, citizenship and rights.

Pupils should be involved in decisions not just about their own individual learning, also about their class and school as a whole. This is to be achieved through the establishment of school councils, regular surveys of pupil attitude, feedback on teaching and involvement in staff appointments.
Evidence of pupil consultation in pastoral care

- Best (2000) found only (15%) of the articles published in Pastoral Care in Education reported the perspectives of pupils
- but this was on general aspects of schooling
- not specifically on pastoral care

- Lot of individual work at Masters level and
- audits for individual school but little published int/nationally.
One example consulting pupils on PSE at KS3

- Pupils said....... 
- ‘Best practice’ in PSE was where teachers:
  - Genuinely enjoy teaching children and are driven by a child-centred approach 
  - Want to teach PSE 
  - Are flexible and willing to take risks 
  - Are willing to consult with pupils about matters which affect them. 
  - Have the skills akin to counselling. 
  - Are able to use humour to deal with heavy and serious matters 
  - Have the skills to work within a group situation and be aware of, and sensitive to, group dynamics.
(ii) Children’s Rights’ Perspective

• Article 12... gives children the right to express their views:

‘States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child’.
Children’s Rights Perspective

*Space:* children must be given the opportunity to express a view

*Voice:* Children must be facilitated to express their views

*Influence:* the view must be acted upon as appropriate

*Audience:* The view must be listened to.

(Lundy, 2007, BERJ)
Unpacking the UNCRC (1989) and pupil voice

**Unpacking the UNCRC (1989) and pupil voice**

**UNCRC**

**ARTICLE 28: Right to EDUCATION**

- **ARTICLE 12**
  - Right to have a say

**Rights related to Pastoral care**

- Article 2
  - Non-Discrimination
- Article 3
  - Best Interests
- Article 13
  - Right to Information
- Article 5
  - Right to Guidance from Adults
- Article 19
  - Right to be Safe
Whose voice gets heard anyway? And how?

Not just audits. Think creatively
Children's priorities in relation to schooling: collective narrative (Kilkelly et al, 2005)

- NO SAY IN SCHOOL: 39%
- NO SAY IN SPORT: 22%
- Other: 12%
- Bullying: 6%
- No say in sports/recreation: 1%
Whose voice gets heard? : accessing the ‘hard to reach’
So much gets lost in the aggregate!

1% : Transport  See Kilkelly et al.
‘Voice’ contested

‘Voice’ is not singular notion but multi-vocal..must take account of difference

‘Voice’ also problematic...not just the words spoken by pupils but includes the many ways in which pupils choose to express their feelings or views about any aspect of their school/college experiences

Fielding (2006) argues that in the current climate of performativity, student voice work is often tokenistic

Often co-opted into managerial agenda
Consulting Pupils on the Assessment of their Learning (CPAL)

CPAL: the research and policy context

In an externally funded top-down project, how do you engage children and young people democratically?
A rights-based approach to e-consultation for children

Step 1: Initial focus group with Student Research Advisory Group (SRAG) to ascertain children's views on the consultation issue and on the most effective way to consult with children.

Step 2: Design e-consultation mechanism based on children's responses to initial focus group.

Step 3: Pilot e-consultation mechanism with Research Advisory Group (SRAG) to ascertain views on content and mechanism.

Step 4: E-consultation open to all participating children.

Step 5: Collate data.

Step 6: Analyse data with SRAG.

Step 7: Inform all participants of outcomes of the consultation and action to be taken.
Questions for this Chat

We asked some children about the way their report looked and whether it included examples of work. Here’s what they said:

"The writing on my report is too small – it hurts your eyes"

"Teachers use lots of words I don’t understand like 'diligent' and 'motivated'"

“Sometimes I’m not sure what they mean about my work. Is
So where does this leave us in Northern Ireland schools with regard to pupil voice in schooling and pastoral care in particular?

• Whole school and wider commitment

• Authenticity? Check for gap between rhetoric and reality

• Vision and challenges for pastoral care
Pastoral care, Pupil Voice and Children’s Rights: Time for a Holistic View?

Where are we and where ought we to be?

1. **STATE/COUNTRY**
   - Are children being systematically consulted?
   - Are the channels of consultation child-friendly?
   - What types of responses do children receive to consultations?

2. **SCHOOL CULTURE**
   - Do we have a “listening ethos”?
   - Is there a gap between espoused ethos and children’s experiences?
   - What processes/spaces are created for pupil consultation on learning, teaching and assessment?

3. **SCHOOL/LEADERSHIP**
   - Is the whole school staff being supported to understand children’s rights, the enhancement of their AfL skills and how we assess impact?

4. **CLASSROOM**
   - How are teachers encouraging participation by children in their learning?
   - Are children involved in evaluating lessons?
   - Is there evidence of increased use of self and peer assessment, negotiation of success criteria etc.?

5. **PUPIL**
   - In what way are children involved in negotiating success criteria, agreed learning outcomes, assessment and practices in classrooms?
   - How are children involved in assessing the impact of classroom teaching on their motivation, learning and progress?

6. **PARENTS**
   - How well are we informing parents about new assessment practices and children’s role in these?

- **SPACE**
  - The right to be heard

- **VOICE**
  - The right to have views given due weight

- **INFLUENCE**
  - The right to be involved in decisions affecting their lives

- **AUDIENCE**
  - The right to be heard by adults
Gaps between espoused ethos of pupil voice and children’s experiences

• School A: headteacher’s representation of school culture and orientation to student voice

‘My vision here is that every girl is supported, (including) girls who are underachieving’ 'I don't think I could ever lead a school where child-centredness wasn't the ethos ... we try to fit the curriculum around the child rather than fitting the child into the curriculum' ‘The most important thing is that we look to the individual ... we put a lot of thought into individuality' ‘We try to make pupils happy at school, make them feel they are part of it ... the teachers care for the pupils ... and go the extra mile' ‘... it's all about relationships ... to me the most important thing is that the kids feel they can approach the staff and tell them what their problem is'
Exploring the culture of pupil voice through pupil images: School A (Leitch & Mitchell, 2007)

I don’t know why I put the maze and the black hole down ... I dunno ... there’s different routes to take ... and cos when I came here I didn’t feel a part of anything ... I dunno, there was no feeling to this school, it was just so new and just empty really, there was no feeling. You’re here because you have to, but you don’t really want to ... I feel distant. I didn’t really mix because they weren’t from my oldest school, and I didn’t really blend in well but those issues have died out. Still ... you always feel like you are in a prison, there’s so much work and you have to get it all done in a short time and you don’t really have time for yourself, and ... there’s no escape .... you go in all small and innocent and go through the years and you do your different exams and you leave .... I’ve no interest in school really. You come, you pass your time and you go ... I don’t really have a bond with really .... Yeah, I’m the little bird .... distant ... shouting

‘Out. Let me out.’!
Gaps between espoused ethos of pupil voice and children’s experiences

School B: headteacher’s representation of school culture and orientation to students

‘This is a very pleasant school ... We create a protective environment here, but not cocooned ... almost unreal where they put on a uniform and they look like little ladies and gentlemen’

‘What we have here is the way the world should be ... you don't drop litter ... you protect yourself and you protect your friends and thus, you're part of the community; they can then be immune from the stuff in the external world and the media that hits them all the time’

‘Pupils will know if you care in a small way, like how you ask them to take out their books, then you must care about them also on the bigger issues’
School B
Pupil Perspective

‘Well, the black thing is a production line and the pupils (are) what’s being produced on the conveyer belt. The pupils are actually developing as they move along the school and the teachers are, like, adding little parts to the pupils and up here is Mr M (the principal) in his own little office trying to develop a way to make the pupils all the same as one another; to have no individuality. Here, we’ve got his eye’ cos he’s got all these cameras around the school trying to watch everything. I don’t think our opinions are really valued as much as the teachers, especially the headmaster’s, and we are all the same. We have to wear the same uniform and there are a limited number of ways you can have your hair; everyone’s the same. And if you try to be too different, you get suspended and told not to come back until you fix whatever you’ve done wrong. We used to be able to show our individuality on non-uniform days and we are not allowed these anymore. We asked the teachers why and they said because Mr M doesn’t like them. This is his cloning machine, trying to clone pupils so they are all the same. It’s his way or no way which is the problem!’
Conclusion

• Much has been achieved: Much still to be done!

• Recognition by those committed to pastoral care of contributions they have already to assuring pupil voice and thus optimising children’s learning and well-being

• Need to celebrate more........

• Do more Singing and Dancing

• and for goodness sake, keep an eye on that golden egg ...........otherwise your goose is cooked! Thank you!
Some references