



**CIDREE**

Consortium of Institutions for Development  
and Research in Education in Europe

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# Including the student voice in curriculum development and review

## Final Report

October 2006

Including the student voice in curriculum development and review

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## **1. Introduction**

The trend towards using models of curriculum development which seek to involve students more actively is evident in many jurisdictions. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has always sought the participation of those most directly involved in the education process in the design and evaluation of curriculum. It has more accepted in recent years that students should play a key role in the development and reform of education systems. This is particularly true of the areas for which curriculum development agencies have responsibility and the practice of many such organisations requires evaluation and in some cases enhancement. Involvement of students as 'real' partners in decision making has not a traditional strength of education systems. Other areas of social policy relating to young people have long recognised the need to inform decision making (and as a consequence policy) by engaging with those most directly affected by its outcomes. The construct of curriculum most immediately familiar to many education researchers, curriculum developers and education partners (including teachers, parents, Government and indeed students) sees the decisions about what is to be learned and how it should be learned being made by those who 'know' about these things i.e. adults. In this model of curriculum, students are seen as consumers, not as co-constructors and hence their diminished role is rationalised, indeed they frequently have no real role. While this environment is changing and indeed has changed in some cases, its influence remains significant when we consider the rationale for and practice of involving young people in this work.

In advance of the intended expansion of activity in this area the NCCA welcomes the opportunity to enhance its understanding of this challenging approach to the inclusion of students in key elements of its work. While a significant body of academic study has taken place relating to the dynamics of student involvement in educational policy making particularly at school level, it is beneficial to examine, evaluate, and share examples of good practice in the context of the CIDREE partners' own experience. The proposed initiative offers insights into the efficacy of the approaches which have been used and also the relative viability of other possible methods.

### **1.1 Purpose of project**

Based on the experiences of CIDREE partner organizations in consulting with young people it was intended that the project would establish, among other things;

- the principles underpinning successful consultation with students
- the procedures employed
- the key characteristics of successful interaction with the students

The intention is that resultant materials will enable agencies to isolate those elements of successful initiatives, which may be applied in interactions with students in other, similar, settings.

### **1.2 Projected outcomes**

In identifying those examples of best practice it is the intention that the collaboration will produce a protocol for including students in the curriculum review process, which colleague agencies can access. This access will enable individual agencies to adapt the elements of the protocols to suit the particular circumstance of the work in question or

indeed its nature. In this way the findings will have a developmental aspect based on the experiences of the end users informing future refinements.

## **2. Methodology**

Following an initial circulation of the project proposal within the CIDREE network a number of expressions of interest were received from partner agencies. Processing of these communications, which included further correspondence, led to a final project group comprising 6 agencies

NFER-England	SLO-Netherlands
ACCAC (now DELLS)-Wales	OKI- Hungary
LTS-Scotland	NCCA-Ireland

As had been outlined in the application to CIDREE in respect of this project, the work was to be framed by two meetings of the group augmented by individual contributions from participants on an ongoing basis. In proposing this initiative the NCCA recognized that partners would have differing experiences in the promotion of student involvement in curriculum reform and varying expectations in regard to project structure and specific outcomes. Accordingly the initial meeting of the partners was envisaged as having a substantial developmental function, refining where appropriate the aims as described in the original proposal and agreeing the precise structure of the projects' operation. In recognition of this developmental approach the methodology is reported in the context of the meetings which took place and the outcomes from these.

### **2.1 Meeting 1....Dublin September 2005.**

Following some preparatory exchange of information the representatives of participating agencies met for an initial meeting in Dublin (30<sup>th</sup> September, 2005).

The documentation which was pre-circulated gave a detailed account of the work of the partner agencies in general and specifically the initiatives undertaken which involved the student voice in evaluation and development work. Colleagues from the various agencies were able to offer further background on the nature of their involvement in student consultation which provided useful guidance on how the project might develop. This phase of the discussion also drew on the themes and ideas circulated in advance and focused on questions such as;

- How has each organisation addressed these issues in its work to date?
- What changes in procedures and/or structures would help an organisation to promote better quality student involvement in its work?
- What project outcomes would be of most benefit to each organisation?

Arising from this session the group agreed that it would be useful to produce a series of questions or framework which would act both as a guide for the design of a consultation process and also as an instrument to review the relevant policy of an organization. In the context of this project the framework would provide a means through which partner agencies could present descriptions of successful existing and recently completed projects. The development of this consultation framework was therefore to constitute the substantive work of the project and be the basis for the development of the protocol.

As a first step it was decided to establish the effectiveness of the proposed framework by relating it to existing projects of the partner agencies. Therefore each agency agreed to identify one or two of its projects upon which it would report in the form of a case study. The projects would either be currently in operation or recently completed. Each report was to comprise a brief description of the nature of the project in question and present an evaluation of the planning and operation of the project using the questions in the framework.

It was agreed that;

- the NCCA would circulate a draft of the framework
- co-operating agencies would review these and suggest amendments
- a working draft would be issued by NCCA (Appendix 1) and each agency would identify one or two projects on which it would report
- a further meeting would consider the effectiveness of the framework and refine the principal aspects of the protocol

## **2.2 Meeting 2....Cork, March 2006.**

Following the submission of the case studies as agreed, it was intended that the Cork meeting would progress the identification of key attributes associated with the various elements of student involvement. The meeting itself was structured to allow for;

- some editing of the case studies
- presentations on the individual case studies providing opportunities for clarification
- identification of principles underpinning the elements of the framework
- collation of the best practices in respect of each of these elements

In advance of the meeting the submitted case studies were reviewed and while all elements of the framework had been addressed it was apparent that some emerged as more significant as evidenced by the priority given by agencies. If these elements were indeed key, then it was appropriate that they would be emphasised in the work of the group. The headings of the framework elements are listed below with those priority elements in bold.

- i. **Why listen to and involve young people?**
- ii. **Who do we listen to?**
- iii. **How do we listen?**
- iv. **How are students kept up to date with outcomes of the process?**
- v. **How do we ensure quality outcomes?**
- vi. Focus with regard to young people
- vii. Who listens?
- viii. When do we listen?

The Project Group proceeded to interrogate these questions with a view to identifying

- a) any underlying **principles**  
and
- b) relevant aspects of best **practice**

...that would inform the decision-making of agencies in planning and carrying out work involving students.

It became evident as the work of the group progressed that in presenting the case studies as samples of best practice and as supporting material underpinning the statements of principles and practice, the report should assist readers in accessing pertinent information. Accordingly, the final task undertaken by the participants was to produce abstracts, to a common template, which would allow the users/readers to identify case studies or portions of case studies relevant to their particular situations. These abstracts comprise a section in the body of this report while the full texts of the case studies themselves can be found in Appendix 2.

### **3. Project Outcomes**

The outcomes of the project are set out in the following order

- 3.1 Principles guiding the involvement of young people
- 3.2 Points of practice for successful consultation

#### **3.1 Principles guiding the involvement of young people**

The case studies themselves describe in detail the various rationales underpinning approaches used to involve young people in curriculum development and review. In an attempt to present some of the more critical issues for the curriculum developers /researchers who contributed the case studies the next section identifies some key attributes of a number of successful initiatives. The framework to which the case studies were written comprised a number of sections each with a main question designed to focus the writers' attention on key attributes of the rationales and processes behind the projects.

In seeking to clarify the rationales referred to above, participating agencies were asked; **Why listen to and involve young people?** In relation to this question, each agency was invited to comment on the status of students' right to be involved in curriculum development/review and to describe what role students usually play in any representative structures that may exist. In addition agencies were requested to outline any policy/legislative provisions which required them to consult/involve young people. And finally in this section agencies were asked to outline what they saw as the main benefits of student involvement. The following are the main points emerging from the responses;

- Young people should have a stake in their own education system ...should be actively engaged in shaping the system. They also have a right to be able to contribute and this implies a need for training (students and adults).
- Students are future decision-makers and will need the skills for effective decision making...problem analysis, thinking skills, perceiving options, developing solutions, etc.

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- Children are active citizens in their own right.
- Such interaction provides learning opportunities not only for young people but also for the curriculum professionals, teachers, policy and law makers.
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Having committed to listening to the student voice a series of procedures come to the attention of any curriculum developer/researcher. First among these relates to the identification of which students are chosen to become involved i.e. **'Who do we listen to?'** This section focussed on the process whereby the potential participants were selected, the manner in which they were approached and the criteria by which they were ultimately chosen. Agencies were asked how they ensured representation from a wide range of students in particular from students who might be categorised as 'hard to reach' e.g. disadvantaged students/those with special needs/homeless...

In responding agencies addressed a wide range of issues but particularly stressed the need to consider;

- students who ....
  - are about to enter into the 'experience' in question
  - are currently experiencing 'it'
  - have experienced 'it' and can reflect
- the widest range of samples of students and not just the articulate
- using both formal (representative bodies, panels) and informal groups

Having agreed the rationale and the population(s) to be consulted thought must be given to the actual act of listening to the young people. What are the most effective and efficient means of involving students. Put simply, the relevant question asked agencies **How do we listen to students?** The intention was to establish what methods of participation were chosen and why. The case studies provided a great deal of detail on the range of approaches and some background on the reasons for selecting them. Information was also sought on the measures taken to ensure that student involvement was authentic and the conditions which were thought necessary for students to participate effectively. The responses recommend that among other things setting up an interaction with young people agencies should ;

- make the purpose of the consultation clear to students at the outset.
- reassure students that their contributions are confidential – that their identities will be protected during the process
- choose a venue for listening to students which enables them to contribute effectively
- structure the consultation with students to ensure that there is an introduction, opportunity for exchange and discussion, and a review of the result.
- set up groups of an appropriate size for consultation
- use ways of listening to students that are appropriate for the type of information required. and to the developmental level of students and their own ways of communicating
- use appropriate language and try to establish consensus on the 'meaning' of students' contributions and respect students' contributions and their own words.
- involve students in the 'listening' process, i.e. peer-to-peer discussions.
- use stimulating and creative methods to ensure that students are actively involved in contributing to the process



- provide students with appropriate skills/tools to formulate their ideas about certain subjects

In the process of engagement with students, what happens after the actual 'conversation' has just as much significance as the interaction itself. The contribution of any partner in a situation like this must be seen to be valued and considered in future decision making. With young people it is especially true and on Hart's *Ladder of Young People's Participation*<sup>1</sup> it is represented as the fifth step of an eight-step spectrum. The step, *Consulted and informed*, characterises the involvement at this level as happening when young people give advice on projects or programs designed and run by adults. The young people are informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of the decisions made by adults. In this section of the case studies therefore the focus was on how to ensure students were clear about their role and students had realistic expectations of the outcomes of their participation. In addition, information was sought on how students were to be reported to on the impact made by their contributions. In responding to the question **How are students kept up to date with outcomes of the process?** agencies suggested attention be given to;

- making the consultation process as transparent as possible for students
- respecting their views and providing honest feedback on the impact of their voice on the project.
- using students' own words for reporting, e.g. quote students verbatim. Tell readers exactly what the students said. Use quotations from students' journals and log-books.
- ensuring that the person reporting can adequately represent students. The decision on who should do the reporting should be part of the project planning.
- agreeing in advance, on what points during the consultation process the reporting to students will happen. This is particularly important in the 'once-off' consultations with students.
- differentiating the feedback to students in appropriate ways - disseminate the final product to students in an appropriate format, e.g. using appropriate language and methods.
- reporting any additional information to students about the impact of the initiative on their own learning (using evidence provided through assessments, etc.)

Having considered the involvement with students in their respective initiatives/projects agencies were asked to identify the factors which most influenced the outcomes and the components/approaches essential to ensuring quality outcomes. Therefore in considering the question **How do we ensure quality outcomes?** agencies observed that;

- the higher the level of student engagement the greater the probability of achieving high-quality outcomes. (Quality of engagement can be referenced to Hart's Ladder)
- involving students at all stages of the project including project design and evaluation is essential (& 'member checking'...verifying findings en route)

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.freechild.org/yapartnerships.htm>

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- quality assurance monitoring re. student satisfaction with the process should be put in place
- attention must be paid to;
  - true representation
  - diversity
  - inclusiveness
  - appropriate questioning
  - confidentiality
  - careful, empathetic facilitation
- projects would benefit from the involvement of a Steering/Monitoring Group to take an overview of the work of the project. This committee should contain not only people directly involved but also people from outside the education system.

### 3.2 Points of practice for successful consultation

The key points of best practice are set out in line with major elements of a notional consultation process; project planning phase, operation of the project, communication.

#### 3.2.1 Planning Phase of the Project

The planning process for the involvement of students should address the specifics of the consultation methodology to be employed and provide a rationale for its use. The following are some of issues might usefully be considered in this regard.

To be considered...	Specific issues...
Clarity of Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What are the aims of the consultation?</li> </ul>
Methodology design	<p>...ought to refer to among other things the inclusion of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ evaluation tools to better understand how students experienced the consultation process and how the facilitators experienced the process</li> <li>▪ procedure for informing the students on how their contributions will inform decisions</li> </ul>
Specifics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Who are we going to consult?</li> <li>▪ What is the procedure for selecting participants for the consultation? Are there access procedures to undertake?</li> <li>▪ Ethical considerations and permission letters; whose permission is needed? Should include an 'opt out clause' and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity</li> <li>▪ How are we going to consult – brief overview including reference to particular consideration of group dynamics, safety, cultural considerations</li> <li>▪ How long is it going to take?</li> <li>▪ How much is it going to cost?</li> </ul>
Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Who in the organization has the skills to undertake the research?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What additional training is required and who provides that?</li> </ul>
Feedback:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What feedback will be given? Feedback ought to include information about how the outcomes of the consultation are or will be used.</li> <li>▪ How will feedback be given to the students?</li> <li>▪ When will it be given and how frequently?</li> </ul>

### 3.2.2 Points to consider during the operation of the project

To be considered...	Specific issues...
Venue/location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ comfort</li> <li>▪ suitability...not always appropriate to use school</li> </ul>
Adult involvement/skills/experience School Staff participation (in school setting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ leader(s) require appropriate skills...training sometimes necessary</li> <li>▪ need to clarify their level of involvement,</li> <li>▪ do the school staff members cater for the students' need for support?</li> </ul>
Pilot phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ clarity</li> <li>▪ manageability</li> <li>▪ fitness for purpose</li> <li>▪ differentiation...language used in material and discussions must be appropriate/suitable</li> <li>▪ timing for the sessions (must adhere to these subsequently)</li> </ul>
Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ time of year/exam periods</li> <li>▪ time of day</li> <li>▪ amount of time</li> </ul>
Properly prepare the participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ extent of commitment (can withdraw)</li> <li>▪ purpose</li> <li>▪ extent of feedback</li> <li>▪ on likely/realistic impact</li> <li>▪ consider developing skills of students e.g. group work,</li> <li>▪ value their input, time</li> <li>▪ emphasise the issues of confidentiality and anonymity(latter difficult in longitudinal study where people are tracked)</li> </ul>
Providing the right atmosphere	Students should be comfortable and well prepared and should

<p>Preamble/introduction prior to sessions</p>	<p>be assured on points such as;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· this is not a test</li> <li>· your opinion counts</li> <li>· your own answers</li> <li>· there are no right/wrong</li> <li>· adhere strictly to agreed time allocation</li> </ul> <p>Consider providing a script for person administering questionnaire or leading the session as it might provide a clear and consistent understanding for all groups</p>
<p>Maintain a balance between promoting a healthy rapport and ensuring a rigorous process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ design must produce a good rapport and satisfy the demands of consistency, reliability</li> <li>▪ responsive to needs of the students</li> <li>▪ adapt language/methods of communication</li> <li>▪ beware of adult interpretation in process – making assumptions about students’ perceptions</li> <li>▪ data needs to be clean/raw and value free (non judgmental)</li> </ul>
<p>Accurate recording essential;</p>	<p>...might include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ tape recording</li> <li>▪ notes</li> <li>▪ formal template</li> <li>▪ children’s own recording</li> </ul>

<p>Specifically related to Focus Groups/Advisory Groups (Refer to Case Study TLS , ACCAC 1)</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Atmosphere is key – this may depend on relationships between staff/students and between students</li> <li>· Comments, even if subsequently reported, will not be attributable to individuals</li> <li>· Consider most appropriate timing - ask the students if possible for their preferences as to day of week, length of session etc</li> <li>· Agree who records the session and how</li> <li>· Where possible arrange direct contact between group and decision makers</li> <li>· Students can influence the agenda – flexible/responsive</li> <li>· Confidentiality, boundaries of discussion – agree ground rules</li> <li>· Summarise key points, establish shared understanding, clarify what happens next... using particular methodologies e.g. recording feedback on a flipchart, can make it easier to establish shared understanding. However, where there is a transcript for example, to avoid subjectivity in the write up, the findings and the interpretation of the findings ought to be clarified with the group before the final write up.</li> <li>· For focus groups, it is preferable if students don’t know questions in advance so responses are immediate.</li> <li>· For advisory groups, it is important that students are well briefed e.g. given student friendly information prior to meeting.</li> </ul>	

### 3.2.3 Communication

#### Follow-through

Depending on the nature of the project, the first step of the reporting process might take the form of a draft report to students. It would be good practice depending on the age and ability of the students to

- thank them initially for their participation
- describe the next steps in the process
- clarify the reporting process
- re-emphasise that their participation in this process is valued

In reporting it is important to use language appropriate to the report's target group/audience.

#### Feedback

Feedback may involve reporting back to individuals, to groups or to representative groups and should be a priority throughout the process. In this regard, any communication should incorporate contributions on the effectiveness of the process from all participants. It is important that feedback is authentic e.g. incorporating the words of students into the reports. In this regard, examples of the contexts of these words should be included i.e. written transcripts (using pseudonyms).

Key points on feedback to students and others:

- use appropriate language depending on age/ ability/ target group.
- decide whether you feedback to individuals/ group.
- make sure feedback is honest/ transparent/ authentic.
- depending of the nature of the research it may be desirable to provide feedback on a number of occasions.

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#### **4. Case Study Abstracts**

<b>Case Study 1;</b> Review of the School Curriculum & Assessment Arrangements – Consultation with Young People <i>ACCAC/Dept of Lifelong Learning &amp; Skills, Welsh Assembly Government</i>	15
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Case Study 1; Review of the School Curriculum & Assessment Arrangements – Consultation with Young People

<p><b>Organisation;</b> ACCAC/Dept of Lifelong Learning &amp; Skills, Welsh Assembly Government Wales</p>		
<p><b>Age of students</b> 11years/14 years</p>	<p><b>Duration</b> 1 year</p>	<p><b>Scale</b> 344 students</p>
<p><b>Curriculum area</b> All subjects of National Curriculum in Wales</p>	<p><b>Typology...evaluation, design, review</b> Curriculum Review</p>	<p><b>Principal methodologies...</b> Questionnaire Focus groups</p>
<p><b>Outcomes / Rationale</b></p> <p>To provide evidence from young people to inform the review of the National Curriculum &amp; Assessment Arrangements</p> <p>To produce toolkits for primary, secondary &amp; special schools to support them in consulting young people on a range of school issues</p>		

Case Study 2; Pupils involved in assessment for learning

<p><b>Organisation;</b> ACCAC/Dept of Lifelong Learning &amp; Skills, Welsh Assembly Government Wales</p>		
<p><b>Age of students</b> 5-16 years</p>	<p><b>Duration</b> 2 years</p>	<p><b>Scale</b> 9 local education authorities, 40 schools</p>
<p><b>Curriculum area</b> All subjects of National Curriculum in Wales</p>	<p><b>Typology...evaluation, design, review</b> Changing pedagogy to increase pupil engagement</p>	<p><b>Principal methodologies...</b> School self –evaluation Implementation of selected classroom strategies</p>
<p><b>Outcomes / Rationale</b> To increase learners’ skills &amp; capacity to participate in consultation/decision making To increase schools’ capacity to use feedback from learners to inform curriculum development assessment &amp; pedagogy</p>		



### Case Study 3; Education for Citizenship; Young People’s Advisory Group

<b>Organisation;</b> Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS)		
<b>Age of students</b> 14-18 years of age	<b>Duration</b> Ongoing since 2003	<b>Scale</b> Students in 20 of Scotland’s 32 Local Authorities are participating
<b>Curriculum area</b> Education for Citizenship	<b>Typology...evaluation, design, review</b> Project seeks to involve students in evaluation of existing programmes and the review of impending initiatives.	<b>Principal methodologies...</b> Students on the Young People’s Advisory Group meet three times a year and are facilitated in giving their views
<b>Outcomes / Rationale</b> The Advisory Group, in the first instance, provides advice to curriculum developers on education for citizenship and how to develop/support it in schools. It also comments on the implications of developments in education for citizenship for young people. The group has begun also to comment on a range of curriculum developments in Scottish Education such as <i>A Curriculum for Excellence</i> and the review of the <i>National Priorities</i> .		

Case Study 4; Education for Citizenship Consultation

<b>Organisation;</b> Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS)		
<b>Age of students</b>  11-18 years	<b>Duration</b>  Ongoing since 2003	<b>Scale</b>  29 Primary Schools 22 Secondary Schools 2 Student Councils  941 Pupil Responses
<b>Curriculum area</b>  Education for Citizenship	<b>Typology...evaluation, design, review</b>  Consultation  Establishing a Young People's Advisory Group	<b>Principal methodologies...</b>  Questionnaire  Focus Groups  Advisory Group
<b>Outcomes / Rationale</b>  To ensure that the views, understanding and experience of young people was taken into account by the review group investigating Education for Citizenship  To establish a permanent forum for consulting and involving young people in the review and development of Education for Citizenship.		

Case Study 5; Portraiture: Developing Portraits of Children in Early Childhood Settings

<b>Organisation;</b> National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), Ireland		
<b>Age of students</b> Age range of children is 0-6 years	<b>Duration</b> Six months from January 2006 to June 2006	<b>Scale</b> The Early Childhood Team will visited 10-12 settings, working in the first instance with a larger group of children but subsequently concentrating on a small number of children
<b>Curriculum area</b> Early childhood learning		<b>Typology</b> Review
<b>Principal methodologies...</b>  The team will make a number of visits to the settings spending time with the children firstly as an observer, and gradually moving into a more participative role. One or two children will be chosen in each setting and these children will be the focus of the team's work over the remaining visits and a portrait will be created of each child.		
<b>Outcomes / Rationale</b> It is intended that the project will help represent the voices and experiences of children in the development of the national framework for early learning. It will also develop exemplars of good practices across the early childhood sector which will be included in the Framework and document good practices by practitioners in planning for, extending and enriching, and assessing children's learning and development.		

### Case Study 6; The Northern Ireland Curriculum Cohort Study

<p><b>Organisation;</b> Research carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research. Funded for the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council for Education and Assessment (NI CCEA).</p>		
<p><b>Age of students</b> 11–16; and post-16.</p>	<p><b>Duration</b> Curriculum review cycle: 1993–2004. Research project: seven years, longitudinal study</p>	<p><b>Scale</b> Survey sample of 3,000 young people from 50 schools, representing a ten per cent sample in NI. Case study sample of 12 pupils in each of five schools – giving a total of 60 young people tracked via annual interview.</p>
<p><b>Curriculum area</b> Whole curriculum (including cross-curricular themes, assessment and qualifications; and themes such as relevance, enjoyment, breadth and balance, etc).</p>	<p><b>Typology</b> Curriculum review</p>	<p><b>Principal methodologies...</b> Questionnaire survey, administered annually; in-depth case study interviews (bi-annual, then annual); observations (of a ‘pupil day’).</p>
<p><b>Outcomes / Rationale</b>  To evaluate Northern Ireland’s Curriculum as a total package from the learner’s experience.</p>		

Case Study 7; Retention of Traveller pupils

<p><b>Organisation;</b> National Foundation for Educational Research ; England</p>		
<p><b>Age of students</b> Year 6 to Year 9 (age 11–14).</p>	<p><b>Duration</b> 3 years</p>	<p><b>Scale</b> 44 Gypsy Traveller pupils were involved</p>
<p><b>Curriculum area</b> Factors influencing school attendance</p>	<p><b>Typology</b> Research and report on the views of students relating to their experiences in school.</p>	<p><b>Principal methodologies...</b> Semi-structured, open-ended interviews carried out face-to-face once in each of the three years.</p>
<p><b>Outcomes / Rationale</b></p> <p>The project sought to identify the factors that may affect attitudes, levels of achievement and continued involvement in secondary education. It also attempted to identify those factors which encourage Gypsy Traveller pupils to transfer successfully to secondary schools and continue to engage in formal education. Outcomes include a book publication, research summary available on the web, and presentations</p>		

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### Case Study 8; European School Development Project

<p><b>Organisation;</b> OKI/KOVI(Hungarian-Netherlands School for Educational Management) Project was international in character with participants from Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, The Netherlands, and Slovakia</p>		
<p><b>Age of students</b> 12-18 years</p>	<p><b>Duration</b> 2002-2005</p>	<p><b>Scale</b> 5 countries, 30 schools, 210 participants (approx. 80 of them are students), 15 experts/program developers</p>
<p><b>Curriculum area</b> A cross-curricular project on the topic of active citizenship</p>	<p><b>Typology</b> Design, development</p>	<p><b>Principal methodologies...</b> Active partnership by using questionnaires, workshops, pilot course</p>
<p><b>Outcomes / Rationale</b>  To produce training course material</p>		

Case Study 9; What do the talented students want

Dutch title: Wat willen leerlingen die meer kunnen en willen?

<p><b>Organisation;</b> SLO. The Netherlands</p>		
<p><b>Age of students</b> 11-13 years</p>	<p><b>Duration</b> Project as a whole: 1 year (2005) Actual student consultation phase is concentrated in a period of approximately 5 months</p>	<p><b>Scale</b> Interviews in 7 schools with groups of each 6 students Questionnaires among 116 students divided over 7 schools</p>
<p><b>Curriculum area</b> Talented and gifted students in the lower classes of secondary education. The student cohort included students in pre-university education classes and students taking part in talented and gifted programmes or those that would be eligible for such a programme based on their school results</p>	<p><b>Typology</b> designing educational materials</p>	<p><b>Principal methodologies...</b> in-depth group interviews written poll (questionnaires)</p>
<p><b>Outcomes / Rationale</b> The outcomes were used in the design and revision of educational materials</p>		

Case Study 10; Ask the student!

<b>Organisation;</b> SLO. The Netherlands		
<b>Age of students</b> 13 – 15 years	<b>Duration</b> 3 – 4 months	<b>Scale</b> Single school
<b>Curriculum area</b> Different aspects of school life: teachers, materials, ICT, buildings, atmosphere	<b>Typology</b> Evaluation and recommendation	<b>Principal methodologies...</b> Tools to create and process questionnaires, organize panel discussions and generate PR
<p><b>Outcomes / Rationale</b>                  Students evaluate different aspects of their school and make recommendations for improvement to the school management ('student inspectorate').                  The school management gets a better insight in the way students perceive their learning environment.</p>		



## **Appendices**

## Appendix 1

### Case Study Template

<b>Project title</b>	
<b>Overall project aims</b>	<p><i>A statement of the agreed purpose of the project describing the impact or outcome the project is to achieve. It is intended that you include 3-6 project aims.</i></p> <p>This project will:</p>
<b>Brief description of the project</b>	<p><i>An outline of the main phases of the project and output of each phase. Identify the phases and outputs separately.</i></p> <p>Project phases:</p> <p>Project outputs:</p>
<b>Focus with regard to young people</b>	<p><i>A description of the population of young people to be included in this project.</i></p> <p>Age range of students:</p> <p>Methods to engage students:</p>
<b>Publications / information available related to the project</b>	<p><i>A list of the most influential sources of literature (including reports, policy documents, research papers, etc.) in designing and developing this project. Identify 3-6 of the most important references (rather than an exhaustive list)!</i></p> <p>Publications:</p>
<b>Contact details</b>	<p><i>Contact details of the contact person or representative for this project.</i></p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Email:</p> <p>Phone:</p> <p>Title:</p>

	<p>Institution: Address:</p>
<p><b>Why listen to and involve young people?</b></p>	<p><i>Provide brief answers to as many of the questions below as you can at this time. These questions concern the <b>background</b> for your project.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does your agency generally accept that students have a right to be involved?</li> <li>- If your agency has a representative structure, what role do students usually play?</li> <li>- Is there policy/legislation which requires you to consult/involve them?</li> <li>- If you involve students in curriculum development what do you regard as the main benefits for the:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· students</li> <li>· project</li> <li>· organisation</li> <li>· community / society.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Do you recognise particular benefits to be gained for marginalised children?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Who do we listen to?</b> <i>Which young people/students do we listen to?</i></p>	<p><i>Provide brief answers to as many of the questions below as you can at this time. These questions concern the <b>design</b> of your project.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How did your project choose potential participants? Were they selected randomly or by applying specific criteria?</li> <li>- What factors influenced the decision on how you made contact with participants? (Individual calls, letters of invitation, etc.)</li> <li>- How did you ensure that a variety of students can be heard?</li> <li>- Does it depend on the context? Is it those for whom it is most relevant?</li> <li>- What special arrangements were developed to ensure you included 'hard to reach' groups? (Disadvantaged/students with special needs/homeless....)</li> <li>- Did the decision on how to involve children and young people rest solely with adults? If so why was this decision made?</li> </ul>
<p><b>How do we listen?</b> <i>What are the most effective and efficient means of involving</i></p>	<p><i>Provide brief answers to as many of the questions below as you can at this time. These questions concern the <b>methodology</b> for your project.</i></p>

<p><i>students</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What methods of participation did you choose? Consultation, representative groups, working groups and committees, inclusion on delegations, students as researchers, debates, portraiture studies)</li> <li>- Why did you consider these methods appropriate?</li> <li>- How did the project ensure that marginalised students (e.g., very young students or those with limited communication skills) were included, in a non-tokenistic manner? (Use of drawings, portraiture studies, dialogue, advocates...)</li> <li>- How did the project ensure that students' involvement was appropriate, empowering and meaningful? (Not tokenistic and/or patronising)</li> <li>- Were students involved as individuals or as representatives of a group in their school/community?</li> <li>- Did students need help in developing skills to enable them to engage in the process and, where necessary, to give feedback to those they represent? How was this help provided?</li> <li>- In designing activities to ensure student participation how did you ensure that unexpected/unintended outcomes would be reported?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Who listens?</b> <i>In your project who did you consider best placed to hear the student voice?</i></p>	<p><i>Provide brief answers to as many of the questions below as you can at this time. These questions describe your project in more detail.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To whom were students allowed to speak?</li> <li>- What interest did those listening to students have in the outcomes of the process?</li> <li>- Were there any instances where a particular category of people should not have been involved in the process? (child protection, parental consent, confidentiality, ethics)</li> <li>- Did schools present the best option in terms of a location for consulting students?</li> <li>- In your project what role did the students' teacher play? – does it depend on the age, ability or the particular teacher-student relationship?</li> <li>- What supports were provided for the student? (Mentor, peer, parental, wider community)</li> </ul>
<p><b>How</b> are students kept up to date with outcomes of the process?</p>	<p><i>Provide brief answers to as many of the questions below as you can at this time. These questions describe your project in more detail.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How did you ensure that students were clear about their</li> </ul>

	<p>role?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How did you ensure that students had realistic expectations of the outcomes of their participation and an understanding of the influence of other stakeholders?</li> <li>- How will students be reported to on the impact made by their contributions?</li> <li>- In your project how will you explain to students how and why, having heard their views, you are making (or not making) a particular response?</li> </ul>
<p><b>When do we listen?</b> When should we consult with students in the curriculum development cycle?</p>	<p><i>Provide brief answers to as many of the questions below as you can at this time. These questions concern the <b>outcomes or outputs</b> of your project.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What changes would the organisation /agency need to make to accommodate greater levels of student involvement?</li> <li>- Is modification of existing structures enough or are new structures needed?</li> <li>- At what stage is it appropriate for students to participate – initiation of review/review itself/design/evaluation?</li> <li>- Do the contexts and outcomes of the different stages influence the potential for involving the student voice?</li> </ul>
<p><b>How</b> do we ensure quality outcomes?</p>	<p><i>Provide brief answers to as many of the questions below as you can at this time. These questions concern the <b>impact</b> of your project.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In your project who is responsible for representing the student voice in decision-making? How do you ensure that the student voice is not lost in decision-making?</li> <li>- How will you ensure that outcomes and decisions are recorded accurately? (not translated into adult views)</li> <li>- For the students and adults in your project, what were the             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Challenges</li> <li>· Successes</li> <li>· Priorities</li> </ul>             related to including the student voice? (style of meeting/participation, language, pace of meetings/debates, knowledge on topic)           </li> <li>- Is there an evaluation of the student involvement (and its impact) in your project?</li> <li>- What standard/framework/principles will be used to measure the project's impact?</li> </ul>

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## Appendix 2

### ***CASE STUDY 1***

#### **Review of the School Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements – Consultation with Young People.**

**ACCAC/Dept of Lifelong Learning & Skills, Welsh Assembly Government**

#### **Aims of project**

This project set out to identify the experiences and views of young people in relation to the following aspects of the curriculum:

- Enjoyment
- Breadth and balance
- Manageability
- Relevance
- Continuity and coherence
- Progression
- Values in education
- Assessment methods and qualifications

The project also developed three sets of materials or toolkits aimed at primary, secondary and special schools. These can be used by schools themselves for the above purposes and can also be adapted and used for any school consultation.

#### **Description of project**

Information was gathered by means of questionnaires and focus groups. Activities were developed and field-tested then piloted with schools as part of the ACCAC review of the curriculum and assessment arrangements. A final pack is being produced for schools to support them in consulting pupils on curriculum issues and other relevant issues in schools. Materials have also been adapted and trialled in special schools.

The development process was as follows:

- Administration of questionnaire - approximately 30 minutes. Pupils completed the questionnaires independently in a classroom setting. A facilitator guidance sheet was provided.
- Collation of information - pupil responses were tallied using the summary scoring sheets. Each pupil questionnaire took approximately 6 minutes to score. Collated results were converted to percentages to allow comparison with other classes.
- Analysis of results - trends in the collated data were identified and key messages under each of the key aspects were summarised for dissemination.

## **Description of young people**

Schools were selected to provide a representative range of pupils in terms of:

- English/Welsh medium
- Geographical location
- Size
- Urban/rural
- Socio economic profile

177 year 6 pupils were consulted (10/11 year olds) – 84 boys and 93 girls responded to the questionnaire and 80 pupils took part in focus groups.

167 year 9 pupils (13/14 year olds) were consulted – 78 boys and 89 girls and 60 students took part in focus groups

## **Key Publications**

*Breathing Fire into Participation* (2002) Funky Dragon - Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales

*The Dragon's Dialogue* (2003) Issues for discussion with children and young people in Wales Funky Dragon

*Pupils' Involvement in decisions which affect them and establishment of school councils* (2003 ) Welsh Assembly Government

*Consulting Pupils : A Toolkit for Teachers* by John Mc Beath, H Demitriou, J Ruddock, K Myers (Pearson Publishing)

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## **Why listen to and involve young people?**

### ***Policy context in Wales***

It is the Assembly's policy to ensure that the experiences and views of children and young people are heard by decision-makers in all public services, including schools.

The Welsh Assembly Government supports the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 13 enshrines the child's right to seek and receive information and Article 12 states that

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‘children and young people are active citizens in the world and have rights to their own opinions, to express them and have them fully taken into account; to say what they think about matters that affect them, and to be listened to including by courts and official bodies’.

The Welsh Assembly Government policy as set out in *Children and Young People - a Framework for Partnership (WAG 2000)*, states that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides "a foundation of principle in our dealings with children". The *Learning Country* (2001) set out the vision for education in Wales until 2010. The *Learning Country 2* (2006) highlights progress made towards these aims. Both documents give a commitment to the development of school councils in every maintained primary and secondary school in Wales which is a statutory requirement from September 2006 . They also detail other ways in which the capacity for the genuine participation of children and young people is being increased.

Funky Dragon, the Children and Young People’s Assembly aims to give 0 – 25 year olds the opportunity to get their voices heard on issues that affect them. Funky Dragon aims to represent as wide a range of young people as possible and work with decision-makers to achieve change.

Funky Dragon’s main tasks are to make sure that the views of children and young people are heard, particularly by the Welsh Assembly Government, and to support participation in decision-making at national level. In addition to 8 young people on the Management Committee, the Grand Council consists of 100 children and young people drawn from school councils, Children and Youth fora in each local authority plus special interest groups.

### **Benefits of Pupil Involvement in Curriculum Development**

In the publication *Pupil Involvement in Decisions that affect them and Establishment of School Councils in Primary, Secondary and Special Schools* ( 2003), the Welsh Assembly Government set out some of the many benefits of participation for pupils. With regard to curriculum development, involving pupils will help them to:

- recognise that they are being taken seriously, which in turn helps to increase their confidence, self esteem and aspirations
- become more active participants in their school community
- develop their knowledge, understanding and skills as creators rather than just as consumers of services
- secure a curriculum which is more responsive to their needs
- work with other people to bring about change and feel ownership of outcomes
- gain skills they will need in adult life such as debating, negotiation, conflict resolution and decision taking.

Pupil involvement in decision making benefits a school/organisation through:

- improved levels of mutual respect on the part of pupils and staff
- improved standards of achievement as pupils learn through participation
- improved behaviour and attendance as alienation and disaffection diminish



- delivery of some aspects of the curriculum, including Personal and Social Education, through direct pupil experience
- greater commitment by pupils to the school and its priorities
- enhanced credibility of decisions as pupils share in reaching them

Pupil involvement may also have an impact on local communities and contribute towards a more tolerant society by:

- creating an empowering environment which raises aspirations
- developing positive attitudes in young people towards active involvement their community and a feeling that they can make a difference
- providing opportunities for pupils to make use of their learning , to reinforce its relevance and keep them engaged.

The impact on children and young people who are often marginalised can be of particular benefit in keeping them engaged in learning and in their local community.

### **Who do we listen to?**

For the consultation about the curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales, schools were selected by the criteria set out above (focus section) to ensure a representative sample. Within these schools, pupils were selected from mixed ability classes and classes which included pupils from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, diverse cultural/religious backgrounds etc. The project was extended to cover special schools to ensure that materials were suitable for pupils with severe learning and communication difficulties.

The researchers liaised with schools , who made the final decisions about which pupils to include from the given age groups (which were selected as these year groups are at the end of primary education - 11 year olds and the first stage of secondary education - 14 year olds).

### **How do we listen?**

Questionnaires, focus group/interviews and group questionnaires were used to gather pupils' views. These methods were considered to be accessible, easy to manage and straightforward to analyse. The materials were also adapted for learners with few communication skills and those who use alternative methods of communication. Support was given to pupils in mainstream with reading/understanding questions if this was required and instructions were given to teachers/others administering project in an attempt to ensure that involvement was meaningful and not tokenistic.

Pupils were involved as representatives of a group within their schools (and possibly representative of particular groups within Wales). Some pupils in the special schools needed help to gain the skills to participate. This was given by developing familiarity with game formats etc to enable independent activity and also developing communication skills (e.g. use of pictures/ cues etc). This work was carried out by the pupils own teachers who were familiar to them.

A commentary was written alongside the analysed results of the questionnaires which drew attention to unusual/unexpected outcomes which emerged from the questionnaires

or focus group discussions. As part of the evidence gathering for the Review, a small number of ACCAC staff also visited schools to engage young people in discussions about the curriculum.

### **Who listens?**

Pupils complete questionnaires on their own. They spoke to the teacher /researcher and their peers in focus group discussions. The researchers had an interest in the outcomes as they had undertaken to provide a full report to ACCAC which would form part of the evidence considered in the review of the National Curriculum. The researchers undertook to feedback to pupils regarding the outcomes and this was completed. (See Appendix 1 for example of feedback to secondary pupils). Schools also planned to use the information from the questionnaires.

The teachers in the participating schools played an important role and were given guidance notes for all consultation exercises (see Appendix 2 for examples). Pupils responses could be heavily influenced by their relationship with the teacher as pupils may not want to hurt feelings by being critical of a favourite teacher – or may exaggerate in the case of a teacher with whom their relationship is not good. Undertaking the consultation in the pupils' own schools had both advantages and disadvantages. Being familiar with the setting may have relaxed some pupils but the exercise might also have been regarded as another "lesson".

### **How are pupils kept up to date with outcomes?**

The purpose of the consultation and the role of pupils were explained by researchers/teachers. The pupils understood that their views were to inform ACCAC's advice to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning. When the decision was made to discontinue the National Curriculum Tests in Wales, one school reported that the pupils were delighted that the Minister had listened to them!

As the National Curriculum review and the introduction of a revised curriculum and assessment framework is taking place over a number of years, many pupils will not however, realise the impact of their participation. ACCAC are considering how pupils might again be consulted as part of the formal consultation on the revised curriculum.

### **When do we listen?**

Consulting pupils is a firmly established policy within the Welsh Assembly Government. Pupil friendly consultation documents are now produced for all consultations which are relevant to the lives of children & young people in Wales. One of the aims of the project was to provide schools with a set of materials which can be adapted to support consultation with pupils on a range of issues in schools. These should be in all schools in Wales by summer 2006 and will hopefully ensure that schools regularly carry out consultations with pupils to inform whole school development.

Regarding the curriculum, a mechanism is needed for schools to feed back to the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). This should be done on a regular basis to build up evidence throughout the cycle of monitoring and review. During 2006, WAG will be

consulting on the revised curriculum for implementation in 2008 and consideration is being given to ways of involving young people in this. Although there will be opportunities for young people to feedback views via organisations such as Funky Dragon, who hold meetings and discussions on the web, there remains a difficulty in making curriculum documents designed and written for teachers seem relevant and interesting to children and young people. Material needs to be presented to them in a different format which – without being tokenistic – presents key issues about the knowledge and skills contained in the documents and the ways in which the whole curriculum might help them learn during their school careers.

Greater opportunities for pupil involvement should be brought about by the increased emphasis on skills, including thinking and communication skills, in the revised curriculum. Therefore after 2008 pupils should be better able to contribute their views on the revisions to the curriculum and assessment arrangements. In any such consultation, there is a need to improve the feedback mechanism to young people to ensure they know the impact of their input and are therefore motivated to participate further. Clear explanations should be given in cases where their advice has not been acted upon.

The existing structures are sufficient in Wales but more thought might need to be given to ways of involving pupils at an earlier stage of any decision making process such as planning the review, identifying relevant issues, deciding methodology and evaluating material. Pupils will generally feedback on their own experience of the curriculum and assessment arrangements i.e. on their schools' interpretations of the curriculum as opposed to the statutory curriculum.

### **How do we ensure quality outcomes?**

Following the appointment of a Children's Commissioner in Wales in 2000, an Advocacy Task Group was established in 2002 to review advocacy services and implement national standards. The lead for this area of work now rests with the Children First Team within the Welsh Assembly Government.

The pupil voice in individual projects such as the NC Review is increasingly important but still not systematic and further thought is required, particularly on the challenges identified below:

- How to provide information (e.g. subject programmes of study, designed for other audiences) in pupil-friendly, accessible formats and obtain pupils' views on these documents rather than their own experiences of the curriculum as interpreted by schools.
- Effective ways of providing feedback to reassure pupils that their views have been listened to. As the Review is still on going, final outcomes have not been fed back to pupils, although it may be possible to reflect these views in some consultation documents.
- Showing the positive aspects of pupil involvement and reassuring schools that it does not mean diminishing the rights of staff.
- Demonstrating that the formal curriculum provides opportunities in many subjects for practice in thinking, problem solving and decision making which can be used to address issues about the life of the school itself. Active pupil involvement should be an integral part of school life and not displace anything in the timetable.

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- Stressing the importance of managing expectations by setting out clearly any boundaries and limitations e.g. for legal or practical reasons. This should minimise the impact on pupils' morale if expectations are raised about wider school issues which can't be met.
- Clarifying the roles/responsibilities of adults involved to ensure a consistent approach to involving pupils .
- Improving success criteria for this area of work (i.e. what will success look like) and setting them out from the start following discussions with pupils and staff.
- Involving pupils in project monitoring and evaluation at every stage.

Successes achieved by the project:

- A large number of pupils from a representative sample of schools gave valuable views about the curriculum and their experiences in school in a manageable format which formed an important strand of evidence in the review
- A consistent approach was achieved through personal contact with schools and the instructions/suggestions provided.
- Quality feedback was provided to secondary pupils in a reasonable timescale.
- Materials took the age, maturity and understanding of pupils into account and provided flexibility, being accessible but without underestimating the ability of pupils or allowing preconceptions about age, ability to hinder involvement.
- Materials were adapted to include pupils with learning/communication difficulties who face particular barriers to involvement.

Reflection on this study has highlighted the need for further work to address the challenges outlined above and the need for a policy framework/principles to inform a more systematic means of including the pupils voice in all future work.

## Case Study 1....Appendix 1

### Teacher's notes - Using individual pupil questionnaires

#### Tips and tactics

There are important principles to consider before using questionnaires as a method of consulting with pupils.

- Make questions as simple and specific as possible.
- Aim to avoid bias in your questions.
- Use pupil friendly words and avoid jargon.
- Avoid negative questions.
- Avoid hypothetical questions.
- Allow for 'other' in fixed response questions.
- Always pilot a questionnaire with a small number of pupils before using it for the full consultation.

#### Practical issues

**Establish the objectives of the consultation** – list the objectives of the consultation and generate an initial topic list which can be converted into explicit questions. Pupils may be involved at this planning stage.

**Carrying out the consultation process** – Where, when and how are important considerations especially when consulting with younger pupils.

**The design** – make the questionnaire easy to read by using a suitable font such as Ariel or Comic Sans and a font size such as 14. Questions should flow easily and be arranged in a logical sequence.

**Types of questions** – a variety of responses can be achieved by using different styles of questions and response activity. This will also have the effect of maintaining the interest of the pupils.

**Think about the possible answers at the same time as you set the questions** – the whole purpose is to gain an insight into the topic under study and so it is essential that thought is given to all possible answers at the time of initial design.

**Introducing the questionnaire to pupils** – the introductory section must be user-friendly and the instructions for completing the questionnaire must be clear and concise.

**Facilitator instructions** – if you are to be sure that you can compare responses, completed at different times with different groups, with different people facilitating, you will need a set of clear and concise facilitator guidance notes.

The sample individual pupil questionnaire is designed for use with Year 6 pupils of all ability ranges

There are three stages in the consultation process:

1. **Administering the questionnaire;** the sample questionnaire takes approximately 30 minutes to complete and ideally pupils should complete the questionnaires independently in a classroom setting. A facilitator guidance sheet for use with the pupil questionnaire is available.
2. **Collating the information;** pupil responses are tallied using the sample summary scoring sheets. Each pupil questionnaire takes approximately 6 minutes to score. A class set of the 30 questionnaires as shown takes

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- approximately 3 hours to collate. Collated results are then converted to percentages to allow comparison with other classes .
3. **Analysing the results;** trends in the collated data can be readily identified and key messages under each of the key aspects can be summarised for dissemination.

#### Key points to emphasise with pupils

“It is very important that you answer the questions as honestly as possible”.

“We are interested in your views, so please don’t discuss your answers with the person next to you”.

“The answers will be completely confidential”.

“This is not a test. Don’t worry about spelling”.

“We will explain how to complete the questionnaires”.

#### Key points for facilitators

It is important that before completing any form of questionnaire with pupils that you:

- Read the instructions for completing the questionnaire beforehand to anticipate your pupils’ responses.
- Read through the introduction and allow them to complete questions 1 and 2, as an introduction to the questionnaire.
- Explain the format of the table. Check that pupils understand the names of the lessons (subjects).
- Help pupils to complete the first 2/3 subjects. Stress only one tick per row. Ask pupils to leave the final column blank.
- Answer any queries.
- Stress the need for the pupils to think about what they have learnt in class. It is not a reflection of the strengths of individual teachers.

The sample questionnaire should take about 30 minutes to complete.

## **Teacher's notes - Using focus groups**

The main purpose of running a structured focus group session is to obtain key underlying messages from pupils about their curriculum and assessment experiences. The intention is to find out about their feelings, thoughts, perceptions and aspirations.

### Organising a focus group session

The following key organisational issues should be considered.

- The selection of a balanced group (by gender, ability, etc.) of participants is essential. A group size of 8–10 pupils is optimum although up to 12 pupils can be invited in order to allow for absentees on the day.
- The chosen venue will need to be informal. Members of the group will need to feel relaxed if the facilitator is to draw out their responses to the questions posed. It is useful for the session to take place away from the classroom, maybe in a less formal room such as the library. In order to complete the feeling of relaxation, refreshments appropriate to the 'make-up' of the group are often offered, such as fruit juice, fruit or biscuits.
- Each group will need to be facilitated by someone who establishes a rapport with the pupils and who will question and probe the group on the key issues under discussion.
- The pupils may or may not know each other well prior to the focus group and should only know a little about the questions beforehand; this will allow for more immediate responses.
- It is advisable to allow a focus group to run for approximately 30–40 minutes but no longer than one hour with primary phase pupils.
- A second person sitting outside the group may record responses both in writing and, if the group agree, on tape. Any written or taped record is used as a basis to write up a summary of the group's responses. The proceedings are only recorded if all of the group agree. The group must feel secure in the confidentiality of the reporting mechanism and must be assured before the start of the session that all responses are non attributable to any member of the group.

## **Case Study 1...Appendix 2**

Feedback forum

### **Sample feedback report to pupils**

User-friendly feedback is a vital part of an effective consultation with children and young people, as it shows that their views are being listened to and being considered when decisions are taken. It is important to provide feedback as soon as possible. Young people should be informed about the outcomes of the consultation and receive a brief explanation of any decisions taken. The example given below is feedback provided to pupils who participated in a consultation carried out on behalf of ACCAC to survey pupils' views about their experience of the curriculum and assessment process.

### **School curriculum and assessment arrangements**

When you were in Year 6, we visited your school to talk to you and listen to your views about your experiences of your lessons and your thoughts on class tests. We promised that we would let you know the outcomes and give you some feedback on the results from all of the schools we visited across Wales. We wanted to find out the views and experiences you gained from your lessons, especially:

- How you enjoyed them?
- Was there lots of variety?
- Could you manage all the different subjects, were there some missing?
- Were they relevant to you?
- Did one lesson lead on from another?
- Were you ready to progress to Year 7?
- What did you get out of sitting the class tests?

You were all very interested and enthusiastic, and pleased that you were being consulted, and you seemed to enjoy completing the questionnaire. Following our visits to schools, some Year 6 pupils joined us in the focus groups, and they were just as keen to share their views with us. You all felt your opinions were important and hoped that “people” would listen to what you had to say, and that it would help the experiences of the pupils who follow you.

### ***What did you have to say?***

#### **1. About enjoyment**

Most of you said that you enjoyed your lessons, with practical subjects such as art, PE, design and technology and IT being the most popular. The least popular lessons were Welsh (only in non Welsh-speaking schools), RE, geography and history. The words “interesting” and “fun” were the most popular words you used when describing your lessons, “boring, dull and hard” the least popular answers.

Some of you said that you had enjoyed your lessons much more in Year 6, the work was similar to Year 5 but harder and more challenging. Sometimes when you returned to the same topic, it seemed to “click” the second time around. All of you enjoyed practical, project-type work and liked to carry out field studies.

#### **2. Is there enough variety?**

Most of you felt you spent the right amount of time on most of the subjects, but would like more time on the practical subjects art, PE, IT and design and technology. Lots of you said that you would like the chance to study other lessons. The most popular choices were French, Spanish and German, but Italian and Japanese were also mentioned. You thought learning a new language earlier would help when you were on holiday and when you moved up to secondary school.

Many of you wanted the chance to learn cookery skills, as you thought that this is an important part of increasing your independence and would enable you to make more informed decisions regarding your diet. Many of you also wanted to do more science, especially chemistry and experiments, but you also understood that your school might not have the facilities.



### **3. Do you manage all the subjects?**

Most of you said that you felt your lessons were just about difficult enough, with the more practical subjects PE, art, music, PSE, and IT a little easier. But some lessons were more difficult such as maths and history. Some of you felt that you had a lot more homework in Year 6.

### **4. Are your subjects relevant?**

English and maths were seen as the most relevant, and useful in everyday life, especially maths when shopping and English and Welsh when trying to communicate and find your way around. PE and IT were also thought to be very useful. IT skills help when using computer programmes and games, and for research on the internet.

### **5. Do your lessons follow on?**

The majority of you said that you could see how one lesson progressed to another and how they linked together, especially English (reading), and IT which linked to lots of subjects, and maths with science. Almost all of you said that you felt you were receiving preparation in primary school that would help you move up to secondary school. Most of you said that you were learning the same subjects as in infant school but the work was more difficult, and you have to work much faster, but you do learn something new each time. All of you agreed that you had become better learners.

### **6. Making progress**

Most of you thought that you were “getting on very well” especially in PE, art, music and IT, and were “getting on OK” in all other areas. Many of you said that you were more confident in your language learning and that you used more complicated words and were able to be more descriptive. You said that you could listen and concentrate better and for longer as you moved through primary school.

### **7. Values**

Most of you said:

- you had learnt how to appreciate and respect your elders and younger pupils
- you help each other by working and playing together
- you communicate more and are able to make more and varied friendships
- you had become more tolerant and more aware of the need for fairness and not to fall out with each other
- you respect your environment and generally welcome opportunities to take responsibility and look after your school.

### **8. Getting on**

Most of you said teacher feedback was best and most helpful when given one to one verbally and written. Marks on work and class tests were also helpful ways of judging progress. Looking over work yourselves and discussing your work with friends was also quite helpful. Most of you enjoyed setting your own targets as you felt involved in your own progress. Many of you felt that you learn by looking over your work and self-correcting your mistakes.

Including the student voice in curriculum development and review

For homework, you felt that parents were there to help but “not to do it for you”. All of you said reports gave a good picture progress and gave your parents feedback, but the words were all the same. You said parents’ evenings are important and that parents should be able talk to your teacher without you being present.

**9. What did we do with the information?**

Your views were included in a report we submitted to ACCAC, the organisation who are responsible for advising the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning in the Welsh Assembly Government on issues concerning the curriculum and assessments arrangements in Wales .

Thank you. Your views have been very helpful

## **CASE STUDY 2**

### **Pupils involved in assessment for learning**

#### **ACCAC/Dept of Lifelong Learning & Skills, Welsh Assembly Government**

#### **Aims of project**

The Thinking Skills and Assessment for Learning Development Programme aims to change classroom practice so that thinking skills and assessment for learning become an integral part. This will:

- Improve pupil performance and increase their engagement with learning
- Increase the pupil's skills and capacity to participate in consultations/decision making processes
- Increase schools' capacity to use feedback from pupils to inform curriculum development, assessment and pedagogy.

#### **Description of project**

Nine local education authorities are involved in a pilot project, Each authority is involving 4 schools (primary and secondary) and 2/3 teachers from each school (including 1 senior manager). A group of 4 special schools is also involved. The project began in October 2005 and will run until July 2007.

#### **Description of young people**

The schools involved have completed a self evaluation questionnaire on their current practice. Individual teachers have completed a questionnaire , reflecting on their practice and pupils perception of their engagement with learning have been gathered through a further questionnaire.

Pupil performance data has been collected as follows:

- KS1 – baseline assessment, prediction of teacher assessment at end of Key Stage 1, current working level.
- KS2 – teacher assessment from KS1, prediction of TA for end of KS2, current working level, other predicted levels from commercial tests at end KS2
- KS3-TA from KS2, NC test levels from KS2, prediction of TA levels for end of KS3, current working level, other predicted levels from commercial tests at end KS3

#### **Key Publications**

Booklets **How** to Develop Thinking Skills and Assessment for Learning in the Classroom and **Why** Develop Thinking Skills and Assessment for Learning in the classroom available at <http://old.accac.org.uk/eng/content.php?mID=708>

Including the student voice in curriculum development and review

The relevant website is currently being redesigned and if the above link is not operational, the booklets can be accessed on <http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk> clicking on curriculum & assessment then more information which will take you to *Thinking skills and assessment for learning development programme*.

Hargreaves D. (2004) *Personalising learning – 2 . Student voice and assessment for learning*. Specialist Schools Trust/SHA

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## **Why listen to and involve young people?**

Policy context in Wales and the benefits of involving young people in curriculum development are provided in Case Study 1 above.

## **Who do we listen to?**

Local Education Authorities (LEA) applied to be involved in the Thinking Skills and Assessment for Learning Development project and were then responsible for selecting schools/pupils to take part. No specific criteria were given regarding the selection of schools/pupils but a decision was made to involve special schools to ensure that the pilot was inclusive in terms of pupils with additional educational needs.

## **How do we listen?**

To gather the pupils perspective of their engagement with learning, schools asked them to complete a short questionnaire. This included 11 statements which pupils rated on a 4 point scale. (See Appendix 1). This questionnaire was simple, easy to administer and accessible to most pupils, although the youngest pupils and those with additional needs required adapted materials. This data will form part of the baseline data on pupils.

## **Who listens?**

The essence of this work is for pupils and teachers to reflect on their own learning and to make effective use of feedback provided by peers/others in planning for improvement. Listening therefore becomes a two way process of equal value to teachers and pupils.

### **How are students kept up to date with outcomes?**

The purpose of collecting the pupils views was explained. The pupils views form part of the school self evaluation package and contributions are already being taken account of by teachers. Feedback will be given on an on going basis and at the end of the project when the extent of any changes in levels of engagement can be assessed.

### **When do we listen?**

The listening process must be on going, with the pupil voice included in a systematic way in curriculum development/assessment work both in the process of school development and in the national cycle of curriculum monitoring and review. The pupil voice should not be a “bolt on” strand but an integral part of evidence collected.

### **How do we ensure quality outcomes?**

This project is in the early stages. We plan to ensure quality outcomes for pupils through the following points which have been identified as common ground between pupil voice and assessment for learning. (Hargreaves 2004)

- Engagement – pupils will be more engaged in their learning and in school life. Teachers should see this as an opportunity not a threat and work towards greater collaboration, open, honest relationships and mutual respect. Pupils from all sectors of the community must be involved in a systematic way, avoiding tokenism.
- Responsibility – pupils will take increasing responsibility for their learning and behaviour. Pupils control will be increased by feeding back information in good time and in an open, accessible way, adapting information as necessary for pupils who require different formats/additional support.
- Meta cognitive skills – the development of these skills will further increase pupil control over thinking and learning.
- Communication and interpersonal skills – pupils will develop the skills to allow them to express their views, construct an argument etc which will, in turn, increase their confidence and interpersonal skills.

The work to include the pupil voice and to develop assessment for learning/thinking skills across the curriculum will maximise opportunities for active participation by involving the pupil in the design of learning, teaching, assessment.

Including the student voice in curriculum development and review

## **Case Study 2....Appendix 1**

Thinking skills and assessment for learning programme

### **Section 4: Engagement with learning- pupil perception**

For each question please could you tick the box that most applies to you in your lesson with this teacher on the Response Sheet at Appendix 4.

1 = rarely

2 = sometimes

3 = most of the time

4 = always

Do you take an active part in your lessons?

Do you offer answers to questions?

Do you hand in homework on time?

Do you regularly complete homework?

Are you interested in you lessons?

Do you act on comments that the teacher has written on assessed work?

Do you do extra work outside of the classroom, without being asked?

Do you love learning?

Do you used what has been learned in class to develop your own ideas?

Do you talk to the teacher outside the classroom about what you have learned?

Do you enjoy your lessons?

Autumn 2005

## **CASE STUDY 3**

### ***Education for Citizenship; Young People's Advisory Group***

#### ***Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS)***

#### **Aims of project**

The remit of the Education for Citizenship Young People's Advisory Group is to

- provide advice to LTS officers, and through them to LTS's Advisory Council as appropriate, on education for citizenship and how to develop it in schools
- comment on the development projects and support activities in education for citizenship being carried out by LTS in collaboration with others
- comment on the implications of developments in education for citizenship for major stakeholders, particularly for young people
- consider the contribution and role of education for citizenship in the wider educational agenda

#### **Description of project**

The Young People's Advisory Group was established as a pilot group in 2003 following a consultation exercise with young people on their views about Education for Citizenship. This consultation enabled the student voice to be represented by the review group exploring Education for Citizenship in Scottish schools.

The structure of the project involved setting up an Advisory Group to comment on, and influence, the work on Education for Citizenship and it was felt that a similar group should be established to hear young people's views and experiences as well as those of adults. This demonstrated the participatory approach being encouraged in schools. The group meets three times per year and has a direct input to the work of the Education for Citizenship team. The group has continued to develop and expand. This year members of the group have been consulted on wider range of curriculum developments in Scottish Education such as A Curriculum for Excellence and the review of the National Priorities. (For more information on these please see publications section).

#### **Project outputs:**

- a. Young People's Advisory Group established
- b. Group membership extended to include 20 of the Local Authority areas from original 5.
- c. Raised awareness within organisation of the group and their remit
- d. Direct input by young people into decision making on national curriculum initiatives

Including the student voice in curriculum development and review

- e. Projects initiated and influenced by young people

### **Description of young people**

Young people with an interest in Education for Citizenship are nominated by Directors of Education in Local Authorities of Scotland. Students are mainly from S5 or S6 but may also be from S3 or S4. The age range of students involved is from 14-18 years. Students may serve on the group for more than one year.

### **Methods to engage students**

Our initial contact with young people is by letter to their school. The main way we engage students is at our face to face meetings. These meetings are designed to reflect the interests of the group in the project, to be participatory, and to be enjoyable for the group members.

We have also communicated between meetings by email and letter with group members and have a dedicated page for the Young People's Advisory Group on our website.

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/citizenship/about/youngpeopleadvisorygrp.asp>

### **Publications / information available related to the project**

Education for Citizenship in Scotland

A Paper for Discussion and Development

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/citizenship/planning/paper/index.asp>

A Curriculum for Excellence

<http://www.acurriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk/about/index.asp>

National Priorities in Education

<http://www.nationalpriorities.org.uk/>

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## Why listen to and involve young people?

The Education for Citizenship initiative established a project Advisory Group in 2003. Since then the group's remit has expanded across the organisation with several key projects involved in consultation on the curriculum also consulting the Advisory Group. Listening to children and young people's views is given a key place not only in the curriculum review document A Curriculum for Excellence but also by the Inspectorate of Scottish Education HMIE.

In terms of legislation the *Standards in Scotland's Schools Act* states that;

In carrying out their duty under this section, an education authority shall have due regard, so far as is reasonably practicable, to the views (if there is a wish to express them) of the child or young person in decisions that significantly affect that child or young person, taking account of the child or young person's age and maturity.

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2000/20000006.htm>

The benefits accruing from student involvement in the project include;

### **Students**

- Personal and social development
- Public Speaking
- Reasoning
- Responsibility
- Negotiation
- Active Citizenship
- Team working

### **Project**

- Responsive to needs of pupils and teachers
- Evaluate effectiveness of project
- Current information on how Education for Citizenship is being implemented in schools and experienced by pupils

### **Organisation**

- Effectiveness of project in meeting aims
- Informed by views and experience of pupils
- Gives a forum for staff to consult directly with young people

### **Community / Society.**

- Reinforces that children / young people have a right to opportunities to actively participate
- Young people who feel respected and valued

There are particular benefits for marginalised children however we would not claim that our group is truly representative of the wide diversity of pupils in Scotland. Pupils have been selected and nominated by their Education Authority or by their school.

Including the student voice in curriculum development and review

### **Who do we listen to?**

In choosing the participants we wrote to all directors of Education in Scotland and asked them to nominate pupils between S4 and S6 who had an interest in and experience of Education for Citizenship in their schools. We have access to a Local Authority Network of Quality Development Officers and Advisors who have a remit covering Education for Citizenship. This group was our main point of contact for schools and pupils.

In order to ensure that the greatest variety of students can be heard;

- all 32 of Scotland's Local Authority areas were invited to participate
- option of Video Conferencing was provided
- funding was secured to support students travelling from remote areas

The Young People's Advisory Group is a select group of young people who are already involved in pupil councils and local forums. Their local knowledge and engagement is important to be able to inform the project.

We have consulted each year with the pupils who are involved to ask their views on how best to recruit young people to the group. The pupils have the best knowledge of any barriers to participation and strategies to overcome these.

### **How do we listen?**

The following methods of participation were chosen;

- working groups and committees,
- inclusion on delegations to conferences,
- students as researchers, debates

Participants were briefed beforehand to 'translate' some of the key messages and curricular details. We chose the above methods because is a time limited group which meets only 3 times a year, the groups structure mirrors other network and advisory groups that we hold with teachers and key decision makers.

All of the students in the group had been involved in other forums and were highly skilled in working together. Information was provided in advance and smaller groups meant facilitators could ensure all members were heard in the larger group.

### **Who listens?**

Students had direct input with decision makers in Scottish Executive and Learning and Teaching Scotland and those listening had a commitment to listen to and include young people's views in decisions.

As with other such groups it did not convene within school premises. Among other advantages this arrangement appears to allow pupils to give their views more freely. Several young people commented that the choice of venue made them feel that the group was more important. The role played by the teacher varied depending on the individual school. Some teachers were simply a point of contact to ensure mailings reached pupils. Other staff arranged travel or escorted pupils to the venue. A small number of staff attended the initial meeting as observers.

### **How are students kept up to date with outcomes of the process?**

In order that the students would clearly understand their roles we provided briefings, presentations and discussion on the organisation and on the group. We ensured that students had realistic expectations of the outcomes of their participation and an understanding of the influence of other stakeholders through discussion. The Development Officer will feed back on action taken as a result of the group's contributions and discuss with the group the reasons for making the related decisions.

### **When do we listen?**

LTS needs to modify its existing structures to establish two way channels of communication between LTS's revised structure and the Young People's Advisory Group. We believe that students should be involved in all stages of the review/design/evaluation process. The nature of the stage will influence the potential for involving students. For example, participating in the review / evaluation stage of the National Priorities meant that the group were commenting on their effectiveness and not on the range or content. This was also the scope and format of teacher's input to the review.

### **How do we ensure quality outcomes?**

While of the Education for Citizenship Team is responsible for coordinating the meetings, all of the project development officers attend sessions. Staff consulting young people have attended face to face sessions with the group to listen to them and engage directly. Minutes taken are approved by the group, young people speak directly to those seeking their views.

The main challenge is in recruiting a wide range of students from all over Scotland and finding a meeting location that suits them. Our next challenge will be in integrating consultation and participation by young people into the culture of all projects within LTS.

### **Successes** include the;

- expansion of the membership of the group and involvement of representatives from, for example, the Western Isles
- inclusion of the group in important national consultations on a similar basis as teachers have been

### **Priorities** for the future;

- to involve the group more in setting the agenda for meetings
- to raise awareness of the LTS Corporate Management Team of the work of the group
- to review the remit of the group in the light of the revised remit of LTS

Methods to be used to measure the project's impact are currently under discussion.

Including the student voice in curriculum development and review

## **CASE STUDY 4**

### **Education for Citizenship; Young People's Consultation**

*Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) in partnership with Save the Children*

#### **Aims of project**

- To gather the views of young people on their understanding and experience of education for citizenship
- To enable the Review Group to take account of the views of young people in its deliberations
- To involve young people in the development of this area of the curriculum
- To listen to young people's views on good practice in schools
- To disseminate results and stimulate discussion within schools on a range of issues relevant to education for citizenship.

#### **Description of project**

The Education for Citizenship Young People's Consultation Pack was developed in partnership with Save the Children in Scotland.

Six copies of the pack were distributed to each local authority who selected pilot schools to work with the pack over a 4 month period. Schools selected covered Primary, Secondary and Additional Support Needs establishments and also some Student Councils. Save the Children also facilitated use of the materials directly at 5 schools.

#### **Project outputs:**

- A report of the consultation
- Local councils using feedback to inform their services
- The review group taking on board the views and experiences of young people
- Establishing an Education for Citizenship Young People's Advisory Group

#### **Description of young people**

Age range of students: Primary, Secondary, Children and young people with Additional Support Needs

#### **Methods to engage students:**

- Questionnaires
- Discussion materials

For further details of consultation materials see Publications section below.

## **Publications / information available related to the project**

Homepage for citizenship education in Scotland

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/citizenship>

Education for Citizenship; Consultation Pack for Young People

[http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/citizenship/images/conspack\\_tcm4-122095.pdf](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/citizenship/images/conspack_tcm4-122095.pdf)

Education for Citizenship; Report of Young People's Consultation

[http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/citizenship/images/young\\_peoples\\_consultation\\_tcm4-122098.pdf](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/citizenship/images/young_peoples_consultation_tcm4-122098.pdf)

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## **Why listen to and involve young people?**

The Education for Citizenship established a project Advisory Group in 2003. This followed the consultation project to give a permanent forum to hear student's views.

The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act and the Children's (Scotland) Act 1995 states that children and young people are capable of and entitled to express their views in matter of importance in their lives. It directs education authorities to have regard, as far as is practicable, their views 'taking account of the child or young person's age and maturity'

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2000/20000006.htm>

The benefits accruing from student involvement in the project include;

### **Students**

- Personal and social development
- Public Speaking
- Reasoning
- Responsibility
- Negotiation
- Active Citizenship
- Team working

### **Project**

- Responsive to needs of pupils and teachers
- Evaluate effectiveness of project
- Current information on how Education for Citizenship is being implemented in schools and experienced by pupils

### **Organisation**

- Effectiveness of project in meeting aims
- Informed by views and experience of pupils
- Gives a forum for staff to consult directly with young people

### **Community / Society.**

- Reinforces that children / young people have a right to opportunities to actively participate
- Young people who feel respected and valued

The project endeavours to find ways of making pupil councils inclusive and representative. Local Authorities decided on the schools to be involved and students participated as individuals rather than as representatives.

### **How do we listen?**

Guidance was offered to schools and teachers that some students might require additional support. As can be seen in the report the provision of this support varied ([http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/Images/young\\_peoples\\_consultation\\_tcm4-122098.pdf](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/Images/young_peoples_consultation_tcm4-122098.pdf)). In order to ensure that unexpected/unintended outcomes would be reported, discussion session notes were returned alongside completed questionnaires.

### **Who listens?**

To gather a wide sample of student's views it was necessary for the collection of data to be carried out in schools by class teachers. We appreciate that this may have affected how open young people were in expressing some of their views. Teachers were facilitators of discussion sessions and distributed and submitted questionnaires and also provided additional support in some schools. The review group carefully considered the comments of young people compiling of the Education for Citizenship a Paper for Discussion and Development.

### **How are students kept up to date with outcomes of the process?**

In order that the students would clearly understand their roles we produced information leaflets explaining the aims of the consultation exercise and Education for Citizenship. Briefings were also given to Local Authorities and Teachers explaining the work of the Review Group. To keep all the participants up-to-date website reports were provided and teachers in schools were enabled to provide feedback directly to their students.

The structure and outlook of the organisation have begun to change in a way which will make student involvement more feasible and commonplace. For example, Curriculum for Excellence encourages more active participation by pupils. In the revised LTS structure consideration should be given to opportunities for increasing the significance of the views of children and young people on curriculum development

### **How do we ensure quality outcomes?**

Arising from the project we can recognise the need to be aware of the conceptual difficulty for some students which hinders their participation as does the level of literacy skills required to complete the questionnaire. Additionally, future initiatives of this nature will have to endeavour to increase the involvement of pupils with additional support needs. On an operational level the initiative had some difficulties with variations in level of support or direction given to pupils who participated.

The process was a success on a number of fronts. Firstly there were 941 pupil responses and the views of these young people fed into review group and report on Education for Citizenship in Scotland. In addition in terms of feedback teachers returned positive evaluations of the consultation materials. It is also encouraging to learn that some Local Authorities using the outcome of the exercise to inform their local practice. In the future it is intended to consider the views and experiences of children and young people in the publication of *Education for Citizenship; A Paper for Discussion and Development*. The impact of the Education for Citizenship project will be evaluated to ascertain what impact this area of the curriculum has had on skills, values, capabilities and dispositions. We will include teachers and children and young people in this evaluation.

## **CASE STUDY 5**

### ***Developing Portraits of Children in Early Childhood Settings***

#### ***National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)***

##### **Aims of project**

This work will enable the NCCA to consult with children, practitioners, parents and where possible, other professionals such as therapists on various components of the Framework as they are being designed and developed. The portraiture study will help the NCCA to

- represent the voices and experiences of children in the Framework
- check the breadth and depth of the themes which will be used to develop the Framework—Well-being, Identity and belonging, Communication and Exploring, and Thinking
- develop exemplars of good practices across the early childhood sector which will be included in the Framework
- document good practices by practitioners in planning for, extending and enriching, and assessing children’s learning and development.

##### **Description of project**

The NCCA Early Childhood team will create portraits of children in 10-12 settings. The team will make a number of visits to each setting spending time with the children firstly as an observer, and gradually moving into a more participative role. Using information gathered in these roles together with guidance from the practitioner, the team will select one/two children in each setting. These children will be the focus of the team’s work over the remaining visits to the settings. The NCCA team will work with the settings in the period from January 2006 to June 2006.

##### *Project phases*

January/February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Orientation briefing with Manager/Principal and staff</li><li>▪ Observation of children – choose ‘portrait’ children</li><li>▪ Orientation briefing with ‘portrait’ children’s parents</li></ul>
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Gather information on ‘portrait’ children</li><li>▪ Group interview with Manager/Principal and staff</li><li>▪ Group interview with parents</li></ul>
April/May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Gather information on ‘portrait’ children</li><li>▪ Individual interview with ‘portrait’ children’s practitioner</li><li>▪ Individual interview with ‘portrait’ children’s parents</li></ul>

##### **Project outputs**



The team plans to make a compilation of the children's portraits (pseudonyms will be used where necessary). This compilation will be presented to the settings. It will also be made available on the NCCA website, and may be included as supporting documentation for the *Framework for Early Learning*, for example, to illuminate the exemplars of good practices. In addition, the team will chronicle the process of the portraiture study and in particular the evolution of the various portraits in a short paper. This paper will also draw out important learnings for the NCCA's work in developing the individual components of the Framework. As with the compilation of the children's portraits, this paper will be available on the NCCA website.

### **Description of young people**

Age range of children: 0-6 years

The NCCA team will work with approximately 10-12 early childhood settings. This profile attempts to reflect an urban/rural representation, children's age range of 0-6 years, cultural and linguistic diversity and the different types of early childhood settings in Ireland. In addition to this, different curriculum perspectives including the Montessori, Steiner and High/Scope perspectives, which inform adults' work in settings, will also be represented. The team will attempt to choose settings which collectively represent as much diversity within the early childhood sector as is practicable.

### **Publications/information available related to the project**

Clark, A. and Moss, P. (2001) *Listening to Young Children: The Mosaic Approach*, London: National Children's Bureau and Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. and Hoffmann Davis, J. (1997) *The Art and Science of Portraiture*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kernan, M. (2005), *Using Digital Photography to Listen to Young Children's Perspectives of their Outdoor Play Experiences in Early Childhood Education Settings*. Paper presented at the Childhoods 2005 International Conference, University of Oslo, June 27-July 3, 2005.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2004), *Towards a Framework for Early Learning: A Consultative Document*, Dublin: The NCCA.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2005), *Towards a Framework for Early Learning: Final Consultation Report*, Dublin: The NCCA.

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### **Why listen and involve young people?**

The NCCA team is engaging in this portraiture study at a time when the importance and value of listening to children is increasingly recognised by legislators and policy makers both at home and abroad. Ireland's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1992 and subsequent legislation and policy initiatives have highlighted the importance of meaningfully listening to children and have served to promote the importance of taking children's views seriously. *Children First* (1999) Ireland's National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children emphasises the importance of consulting with children in a manner appropriate to their needs. Consultation with children is also a key principle underpinning the work of the National Children's Office (NCO) which was established to oversee the implementation of the National Children's Strategy (2000). The most recent public manifestation of the importance Irish society places on giving children a voice has been the involvement of children in appointing the Ombudsman for Children.

Changes in the way that legislators and policy makers view the importance of listening to and consulting with children reflect a changing understanding of childhood. Recent years have seen an evolution in traditional understandings with sociological perspectives generating a new sociology of childhood. This sociology sees children as a distinct group in society; a social group which should be understood and considered independently of adults. The *Framework for Early Learning* is grounded in the understanding that *there are many different experiences of early childhood in Ireland today* (2004, p.20).

This uniqueness of the individual child is captured in the vision for the Framework, which was widely endorsed by the early childhood sector in the consultation in 2004. This vision captures the importance of all children being supported in their learning and development in ways which 'reflect their individuality as well as their diverse experiences of childhood in Ireland in terms of their abilities, cultures, languages and socio-economic backgrounds'. (NCCA, 2004, p.13)

This new sociology of childhood views children as being active in shaping and creating their own lives as opposed to being passive recipients of life's experiences. This perspective necessitates a fundamental shift in thinking about children and in particular their capacities and competencies as participants in this portraiture study.

### **Who do we listen to?**

These settings will reflect the diversity of settings found in Ireland. Factors to consider including age of the child, length of day for the child (sessional or full-day provision), culture/language/socio-economic background of the child, guiding philosophy of the setting, and type of setting —public/voluntary/community/private. The settings will be selected to reflect this diversity as much as is practicable. Geographical location will also be considered to ensure representation of both urban and rural settings.

During the NCCA's consultation with the early childhood sector in 2004, a number of regional and national organisations offered their support in identifying settings for work such as the portraiture study. The NCCA has been working with these organisations in identifying and inviting settings to participate.

### **How do we listen?**

In designing this portraiture study, the NCCA team is drawing on recent work in the field of 'listening' to young children. In particular, it draws on the work of Clark and Moss (2001) in identifying methods for gathering and analysing information which are sensitive to the strengths and abilities of children from 0-6 years. Clark and Moss developed the Mosaic Approach as a way of listening which acknowledges children and adults as 'co-constructors of meaning'. It is an integrated approach which combines the visual with the verbal. This approach provides the "how" for the NCCA's portraiture study. Recognising that children have different 'voices' and therefore different modes of communication (pre-verbal and verbal), the Mosaic Approach uses a range of imaginative methods to gather and analyse what children are thinking, experiencing and communicating without relying on spoken or written words.

#### *Gathering information*

Methods such as photography and drawing which convey children's meaning in alternative symbolic forms, can in turn provide a springboard for thinking, talking and listening. In selecting methods for listening to children from 0-6 years, the NCCA team will seek a balance between methods which rely solely on written and/or spoken word, and those which focus on the visual or the visual in combination with the spoken word. Practitioners and parents also offer important perspectives. Collectively, this information provides the 'pieces' of the Mosaic which the NCCA team will use to create the portraits of babies, toddlers and young children. Appendix A provides a diagrammatic representation of these different pieces of the child's voice.

#### *Observation*

The NCCA will use observation as a way of gathering information on children's experiences throughout the duration of their visits to the early childhood settings, and in particular during the initial visits. Taking on the role of participant observer, each team member will observe and document the children's interactions with other children and with adults. The team will use the narrative accounts of interactions and experiences to feed into ongoing discussions with the children, their parents and practitioners.

While the NCCA team will draw on a range of methods to gather information on and from all children in the study, observation becomes increasingly important the younger the children involved. In observing pre-verbal children and especially babies, the team will listen to their body language, their vocalisations, their facial expressions, movements and reactions to build up an authentic impression of what being a baby in different settings is like.

#### *Photography*

Children's own photography is used increasingly in research as a means of understanding more clearly how children perceive their experiences in early childhood settings. Children enjoy using cameras. The NCCA team plans to provide opportunities for toddlers and young children to use digital cameras to capture in pictures, their experiences in the settings. The children will have opportunities to experiment with the cameras prior to using them to collect information for the portraits. This familiarisation process will be aided by the immediacy of the photographs being displayed on screen. Once familiar with the cameras, the children will use them while on walking tours of the settings with the NCCA team member. Using cameras in this way may give the children a means of providing more detail about what is important to them in the settings and

why. The NCCA team will use the photographs as a basis for discussions with the (verbal) children during mapmaking activities.

#### *Audio- and video-recording*

The NCCA team plans to use audio- and video-recordings of the children as another means of gathering information. Video-recording is likely to be particularly useful for pre-verbal children with audio-recordings being more relevant for verbal children. The team will use audio-recordings during the walking tours to capture children's commentaries on particular places, spaces, activities, objects and people in their settings.

#### *Child conferencing*

Talking to (verbal) children is an important method in understanding their daily experiences. Child conferencing provides an interview structure for talking to young children about their experiences. The NCCA team will use a semi-structured interview schedule which focuses on themes such as what activities the children enjoy doing in the setting, what places they like being in, who they like spending time with, and what they would change (see Appendix B). In planning for using this method, the team is mindful of the more intrusive nature of interviewing for children than other methods such as observation. In reducing the potential impact of this intrusiveness, the team will;

- explain the purpose of the interview to the children in a way in which they can understand.
- use language which takes account of the children's verbal abilities. This will be done more easily as the team builds relationships with the children and develops an understanding of their strengths, abilities and needs as communicators.
- choose a physical setting for the interview with which the children are familiar and in which they feel comfortable.
- be sensitive in responding to the children's verbal and non-verbal communications.
- give more/less time to the interview as the children dictate.

#### *Walking tours and mapmaking*

In using walking tours in the portraiture study, the children will act as guides for the NCCA team. They will lead a tour of the setting and decide what information is to be recorded and how it is to be recorded—through photography, drawings, and/or audio-/video-recording. These opportunities to direct the tour and to talk openly about their experiences in the settings create windows for the NCCA team to listen to what children prioritise in their settings, what interests and excites them, as well as what puzzles them.

Mapping provides a means of exploring the information recorded by the children while on the tour, and of creating a map of their experiences of and in their setting. The NCCA team will support the children in reviewing their photographs and their recordings and in selecting what they want to show on their maps. Some children may choose to augment the maps with their own drawings and mark-makings. The maps may help the NCCA team to clarify the children's priorities, their likes and dislikes in their settings.

#### *Interviews with practitioners and parents*

Adults, and in particular the children's practitioners and parents have much to contribute to the portraits. Throughout the portraiture study, the NCCA team will liaise closely with the children's practitioners. This will be particularly important in the early stages of the

study when each team member is building up a picture of the early childhood setting and the children in that setting with a view to identifying portrait children. Equally, throughout the study, the practitioners will have insights into the children and their experiences in the setting which will be important in creating the portraits. Ongoing discussions between the practitioners and the NCCA team will yield much of this information. The team also plans to carry out a semi-structured interview with each portrait child's practitioner. The purpose of this interview is to access more detailed and focused information about the practitioner's perspective on the individual child's experiences in the setting.

Parents are their children's primary carers, their first teachers, and the ones with in-depth knowledge of their own children. Similar to the interview with practitioners, the NCCA team will carry out a semi-structured interview with the parent(s) of each portrait child (see Appendix C). As before, the purpose of the interview is to gather the parent(s)' perspectives on the child's experiences in the setting. These perspectives are especially important in the case of pre-verbal children.

The NCCA team will carry out additional interviews with practitioners and parents. These interviews will provide the team with information about specific components of the *Framework for Early Learning*. In addition, the team has developed interview schedules for practitioners and managers/principals aimed at eliciting more detailed information on areas such as a thematic framework, and planning for and assessing children's early learning and development. This information will feed directly into the development of the different components of the Framework.

### **How are students kept up to date with outcomes of the process?**

During the analysis phase the team will will arrange for information to be shared between the;

- children and the NCCA team member
- practitioners and the NCCA team member
- parents and the NCCA team member.

and use it to focus dialogues and reflections. Very importantly, the process will involve children thinking and talking about their own perspectives of their experiences in the settings, and in this way, helping the NCCA team to create more authentic portraits of the children themselves.

### **How do we ensure quality outcomes?**

#### *Facilitating active participation by children*

It is particularly necessary to reflect on the issue of facilitating active participation by children in the portraiture study due to the fact that traditionally children have often been passive participants in research studies which explore issues related to them. In designing the portraiture study, the methodologies chosen were selected in order to ensure the active, engaged participation of the 'portrait' children.

#### *Ethical concerns*

In the case of research studies which involve young children there is a particular need for careful consideration of ethical issues. The UNCRC, mentioned earlier, highlights that children are competent human beings with rights to be respected which points to the need for a code of ethics to be established and put in place for any research that involves children. The ages of the children in the NCCA's portraiture study makes the establishment of this code all the more relevant and necessary.

It will be important to respect:

- children's right to information
- what children show and tell
- children's right to participate.

#### *Respecting children's rights to information*

In respecting children's rights to information, the NCCA team will;

- ensure that the information given to children is presented in a way that they can understand.
- help the children to understand the portraiture study—what it is about, what we hope to accomplish, their role, the benefits and consequences of participating, what we will do with their 'words' and any visuals we or they produce e.g. digital photographs, digital video footage, audio-recordings or artwork, how the portraits will be created, how confidentiality will be upheld, their choice to participate or not, and to withdraw at any time.
- give the children time to ask questions, seek clarification or further information.

#### *Respecting what children show and tell*

In respecting what children show and tell, the NCCA team will;

- listen for the stories of babies, toddlers and young children in the settings
- recognise that their adult assumptions about what children consider important in relation to their care and education may not be a priority for the children
- respect the diversity of views amongst children and between children and adults
- acknowledge the differences, for instance of ability, age, race, ethnicity and experience, amongst children to ensure that the stories represented in the final portraits reflect differing experiences of early childhood
- offer a range of verbal and non-verbal means and resources to support children in telling their stories
- give the children time to communicate what they want to express
- value how different children make sense of their experiences
- share the portraits with the children so that they can check the interpretations of their experiences, and so that they know their voices are being listened to

#### *Respecting children's rights to participate*

In respecting children's rights to participate, the NCCA team will;

- consult the children on when and where they want the different activities in the study to be undertaken
- consult the children about the resources they want to use to tell their story
- offer the children a choice of different ways to share what is important to them
- recognise the power relations that exist in language and events, and the way that the social context, the location, the purpose, the participants or the time of day influence both what the children articulate and how they express themselves.
- offer authentic opportunities for the children to give their views and articulate their concerns, feelings and aspirations about matters that are important to them
- give the children time to explore what is important to them
- provide the children with different and appropriate contexts to express their views
- heed the children's right to change their initial decision both in terms of withdrawing and participating
- demonstrate a ready willingness to learn from the children
- feed back to the children on the progress of their portraits

In addition to the above ethical considerations, the NCCA's work with children in the early childhood settings will be informed by the principles for best practice in child protection as presented in *Children First* (1999) Ireland's National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children. These principles set out the parameters for interactions between the NCCA team members and the portrait children. These protocols address areas such as where information will be gathered from the children, and in the presence of whom. The team will also present the settings with Garda (police) clearance statements in the process of arranging access and entry to the settings.

The issue of 'informed consent' is especially relevant in the context of the NCCA's portraiture study. Children's participation in the study will be subject to their parents'/guardians' consent. On receiving this consent, the NCCA team will ensure that the children understand that they can stop participating in the study at any time, and that they do not have to participate in all the activities or answer all the questions asked of them. The positive focus of portraiture on documenting what is *good and healthy* about children's experiences in early childhood settings should help in building trust and confidence with the children, their parents and practitioners. This in turn should encourage participation in the study.

## Appendix A: Mosaic of one child's portrait (Aria, aged 2½ years)



Differences between children in, for example, physical, intellectual or linguistic ability, ethnicity or culture will also influence the choice of methods used to gather information. For example, in the case of a child with an intellectual disability, methods which do not rely on written or spoken words may provide greater opportunities for the child to share his/her experiences within the setting. Similar methods may be more appropriate for a child whose first language is neither Gaelige nor English.

## Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview with 'Portrait' Children

The following guide will be used for the child conferencing with the 'portrait children'<sup>2</sup>. This interview is scheduled for approximately 10-15 minutes (although the NCCA researcher will be flexible and complete the interview in less/more time as intimated by the children).

### Introduction

The NCCA team member

- checks that the children are happy to take part in the discussion
- thanks the children for taking part in the discussion
- explains to the children that they only answer questions they wish to answer, and that they can stop talking at any time
- explains to the children that the discussion will help the interviewer to learn about what it's like to be in the [TYPE OF SETTING], and that what they have to say will be very important in helping the interviewer to do this

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<sup>2</sup> The 'portrait child' will be interviewed with a friend.



- confirms that the Child Consent Form [signed by a parent on behalf of the child] is signed
- invites and answers any questions the children may have about the discussion.

Questions exploring [NAME OF CHILD] experiences in the early childhood setting

1. Why do you come to the [TYPE OF SETTING]?
2. What do you like best about being here?
3. What don't you like about being here?
4. What do you like doing best when you are here?
5. Who are your favourite people here?
6. What do the grown-ups do here?
7. What are your favourite places in the [TYPE OF SETTING]? What do you like doing in these places?
8. What things do you like doing best in [TYPE OF SETTING]?
9. What things do you not like doing in [TYPE OF SETTING]?
10. The interviewer will insert 1- 2 questions which relate to specific interests of the children (these will be identified over time as the interviewer builds a relationship with the children).
11. Would you like to tell/show me anything else about what you do here in the [TYPE OF SETTING]?

### **Appendix C First semi-structured interview with Parents/Guardians**

The following guide will be used for the first semi-structured interview with parents/guardians. This is an individual interview with the parents/guardians of the portrait child. This interview is scheduled for approximately 10-15 minutes.

**Questions about [NAME OF CHILD]'s experiences at home and in [NAME OF SETTING]**

1. What age is [NAME OF CHILD]?
2. Where does he/she come in the family?
3. What do you think would be an enjoyable day for [NAME OF CHILD] at home?
4. What does he/she like doing indoors at home? How does he/she show this?
5. What does [NAME OF CHILD] like doing outdoors at home? How does he/she show this?
6. What does he/she not enjoy doing at home?
7. What sort of trips does [NAME OF CHILD] enjoy going on?
8. What are his/her favourite toys/activities? How can you tell?
9. How long has [NAME OF CHILD] been attending [NAME OF SETTING]?
10. Did you choose this setting for particular reasons?
11. What benefits do you think [NAME OF CHILD] gets from attending this [TYPE OF SETTING]?

12. Did he/she attend any other out-of-home settings before coming to [NAME OF SETTING]?
13. How does [NAME OF CHILD] adapt to being in the setting on a daily basis? How do you think he/she feels about going to the setting? How do you know this?
14. What do you think would be an enjoyable day for [NAME OF CHILD] in the [TYPE OF SETTING]?
15. What does he/she particularly enjoy doing at [TYPE OF SETTING]?
16. What does he/she not enjoy doing at [TYPE OF SETTING]?
17. Has a key worker been assigned to [NAME OF CHILD]? If yes, how does [NAME OF CHILD] relate to him/her? Which other people does he/she enjoy being with in [TYPE OF SETTING]?
18. Is there any other information you would like to share about [NAME OF CHILD]'s daily experiences at home or in [TYPE OF SETTING]?

## **CASE STUDY 6**

### ***The Northern Ireland Curriculum Cohort Study***

#### ***National Foundation for Educational Research***

#### **Aims of project**

The overall purpose of this project was to evaluate the Northern Ireland Curriculum as a total package through an analysis of the learner's experience. As set out at the start of the project in 1996, this project would:

- explore pupils' experiences and perspectives of the NI Curriculum, including the nature of pupils' whole curriculum learning
- garner pupils' experiences and perspectives of breadth and balance, relevance, enjoyment, manageability, assessment, continuity and progression, coherence and the cross-curricular themes within the NI Curriculum.

These aims covered pupils' experiences at the end of Key Stage 2 and throughout Key Stage 3; and continued into Key Stage 4 – with more detailed inclusion of themes such as assessment, careers education and work-related learning.

In 2001/02, there was an extension of the project into post-16. Here, amongst other aims, the project would:

- document the post-16 destinations of all 3,000 young people involved in the NI Curriculum Cohort Study
- explore young people's perceptions of the curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 in the light of their post-16 experiences.

#### **Description of project**

A seven-year project undertaken for the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council for Education and Assessment (NI CCEA), this has been one of the largest and most comprehensive studies of the learners' experience of the curriculum. The study tracked 3,000 young people from the age of 11 throughout their five years of compulsory post-primary education. These young people's post-16 destinations and experiences were also explored.

#### **Project phases:**

**1993** – officers of the then NI Curriculum Council approached the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) in order to discuss the feasibility of evaluating the learner's experience of the NI Curriculum.

Including the student voice in curriculum development and review

**1994–1995** – a pilot study involving five post-primary schools, to explore the viability of the proposed research and trial various methods

**1995–1999** – the full Cohort Study began in 1996 with pupils in their final year of primary school. This phase of the research continued into Key Stage 3

**1999–2001** – the Cohort Study continued into Key Stage 4

**2002–2003** – the post-16 phase of the research took place

**2004** – a full overview of the Cohort Study (desk-based phase).

Project outputs – reports from each phase:

Harland, J., Kinder, K., Ashworth, M., Montgomery, A., Moor, H. and Wilkin, A. (1999a). *Real Curriculum: at the End of Key Stage 2. Report One from the Northern Ireland Curriculum Cohort Study*. Slough: NFER.

Harland, J., Ashworth, M., Bower, R., Hogarth, S., Montgomery, A. and Moor, H. (1999b). *Real Curriculum: at the start of Key Stage 3. Report Two from the Northern Ireland Curriculum Cohort Study*. Slough: NFER.

Harland, J., Moor, H., Kinder, K. and Ashworth, M. (2002). *Is the Curriculum Working? The Key Stage 3 Phase of the Northern Ireland Curriculum Cohort Study*. Slough: NFER.

Harland, J., Moor, H., Lord, P., Kinder, K., Kaur, S., Johnson, F. and Dingle, R. (2003). *Talking 4: The Pupil Voice on the Key Stage 4 Curriculum*. Belfast: CCEA.

Moor, H., Bedford, N., Johnson, A., Hall, M. and Harland, J. (2004). *Moving Forward: Thinking Back. Young People's Post-16 Paths and Perspectives on Education, Training and Employment. The Post-16 Phase of the Northern Ireland Curriculum Cohort Study: Full Report*. Slough: NFER.

Harland, J., Moor, H., Lord, P. *et al.* (forthcoming). *The Northern Ireland Curriculum Cohort Study: An Overview Study*. Belfast: CCEA.

Other project outputs – seminars to curriculum developers, individual feedback to schools on their survey results compared with the whole, papers at conferences (e.g. ECER 2004).

**Description of young people.**

Age range of students: 11–18 years old (note that the same cohort of pupils was tracked throughout this time, i.e. from the last year of primary school, throughout the secondary phase and into their post-16 destinations).

Sample size:

At the end of Key Stage 2 ...ten primary schools were involved; two feeder schools for each of the five case-study schools to participate at post-primary level. The sample comprised 60 pupils in their final year of primary school; six from each of the ten schools. Equal numbers of boys and girls and a cross-section of all abilities were incorporated.

Throughout Key Stages 3 and 4...60 pupils from five case-study schools, and 3,000 young people from a representative sample of 50 schools were tracked.

At post-16 ...100 of these young people were involved, and the destinations of the 3,000 cohort young people were collected.

**Methods to engage students:**

At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils were interviewed and observed in class with further post-observation interviews.

Throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 the 60 case-study pupils were interviewed and observed – biannually in Key Stage 3 and annually in Key Stage 4. In addition, an annual questionnaire was completed by the 3,000 cohort.

At post-16, interviews were carried out with the young people in education, employment and training.

**Publications / information available related to the project**

Selected publications relevant to the Cohort Study at the end of Key Stage 2 and throughout Key Stages 3 and 4:

Department of Education for Northern Ireland (1989). *Education Reform in Northern Ireland: The Way Forward*. Bangor: HMSO.

Lord, P. and Harland, J. (2000). *Pupils' Experiences and Perspectives of the National Curriculum: Research Review* [online]. Available:  
[http://www.qca.org.uk/rs/rer/pupils\\_perspectives.asp](http://www.qca.org.uk/rs/rer/pupils_perspectives.asp) [21 January 2002]

Northern Ireland Curriculum Council (NICC) (1990). *The Northern Ireland Curriculum: A Guide for Teachers*. Belfast: NICC.

Northern Ireland Curriculum Council (NICC) (1991). *Allocating Time to Curriculum Elements at Key Stage 3: An Advisory Paper*. Belfast: NICC.

**Selected publications relevant to the final overview project:**

Including the student voice in curriculum development and review

Costello Report. Department of Education Northern Ireland (2004). *Future Post-primary Arrangements in Northern Ireland: Advice from the Post-Primary Review Working Group* [online]. Available: [http://www.deni.gov.uk/pprb/costello\\_report.htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/pprb/costello_report.htm) [28 April, 2005].

Council for the Curriculum, Examinations And Assessment (2003). *Pathways - Proposals for Curriculum and Assessment at Key Stage 3* [online]. Available: <http://www.ccea.org.uk/ks3/> [28 April, 2005].

Working Group on 14–19 Reform (2004b). *14-19 Curriculum and Qualifications Reform: Final Report of the Working Group on 14-19 Reform*. London: DfES. [The Tomlinson Report.]

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### **Why listen to and involve young people?**

The NFER Northern Office has a long track record in research focusing on the voice of young people. This has included a number of projects focusing on young people's views of education and learning (including formal and informal learning), experiences of school, and of the curriculum.

The NI Curriculum Cohort Study was commissioned by the NI CCEA as part of its remit to keep all aspects of the curriculum under review. NI CCEA was particularly keen to ascertain the pupils' perspective – to complement the Council's curriculum monitoring programme (for example, on the appropriateness of the programmes of study, attainment targets for individual subjects, and so on). The NFER undertook this pupil focused research. Underpinning the NI Curriculum Cohort Study were two important strands:

- the curriculum as specified, planned and implemented by policymakers and practitioners; and
- the curriculum as experienced and internalised by pupils.

It is the second of these that forms the focus of this case study here.

**Benefits for the young people** involved included: the opportunity to help shape the nature of the future curriculum offered, for example, to their siblings; and to reflect on their learning, their schooling and their curriculum experiences. This was widely appreciated by those involved – '*all pupils should have the opportunity to reflect like this each year*' was a common sentiment from our interviewee respondents.

The pupils' perspective was central to this project. Their discourse, words and insights helped to frame themes in our analysis and reporting (such as relevance, continuity and progression, and coherence) *from their perspective*. i.e. relevance was construed as 'useful' or 'not useful to me', 'important for a job', 'for passing exams'; and continuity and progression was discussed in terms of 'build on' or 'follow on' in their learning.

In focusing on pupils' (as well as teachers') perspectives of the whole curriculum and its longitudinal effects on learning, the project itself represented an important development in the methods used to monitor the implementation of the Curriculum and to address a largely unresearched area – with potential for practical benefits to policy-makers, schools, teachers and the research community.

### **Who do we listen to?**

The participants were to provide a ten per cent sample of those in post-primary education in Northern Ireland. School sample criteria were so as to provide a representative sample for the survey (based on variables such as school size, religious orientation, secondary/grammar and region – i.e. Education Library Board); and an illustrative sample for the case study schools. The pupil survey sample involved the full year group in each of the 50 schools. The pupil interviewee sample involved 12 pupils per school, including an equal mix of boys and girls, and a range of abilities.

As the NI Study was to be a longitudinal study over three-plus years initially, and given the age of the pupils when first involved in the study, parental permissions were sought for the case-study pupils to be involved. As the project continued into Key Stage 4, school permissions only were requested by the researchers. The schools' own requirements for parental permission etc were dealt with by the schools themselves, if needed. At post-16, individual letters and telephone calls were made to the participants inviting them to be involved.

The NI Curriculum Cohort Study included pupils from: secondary and grammar schools; across the ability range; and from different socio-economic backgrounds (using school Free School Meal status as an indicator). Where pupils with learning difficulties/special needs were involved, the researchers asked the schools to assist as appropriate when the questionnaires were administered. At post-16, the study included those in full-time education, in training or employment, and those who were unemployed or other (e.g. motherhood). Target numbers to represent these populations within our 3,000 cohort were drawn up.

The overall research design – a longitudinal cohort study involving a survey and a case-study strand – was developed by the researchers. This design would provide robust data, and would complement other curriculum monitoring by CCEA.

### **How do we listen?**

The Cohort Study involved an annual questionnaire, bi-annual then annual interviews (semi-structured), and observation/shadowing a pupil throughout their school day with a post-observation interview. In one year of the study, pupil drawings/maps were also collected on 'Everything I learn in Year X'.

This research method would provide robust statistical and quantitative data, as well as qualitative insight. The design was repeatable each year, and replicable across different sites – so as to ensure consistency of data collection and results that would be generalisable to the whole population. Careful piloting of the instruments ensured their suitability for all pupils in mainstream education to be involved. The questionnaires were researcher administered (i.e. read through question by question, taking the pupils through the questionnaire), and with the researcher(s) on hand to answer queries. Schools were asked to provide assistance to pupils with learning difficulties, where appropriate.

The same students were involved as interviewees throughout the Cohort Study. This offered the opportunity to build up positive relationships with the link researcher (generally the same researcher) over the years. However, this might also pose potential for a sense of ‘repetition’, ‘boredom’ or disengagement’ amongst the students from the process. In order that this method was appropriate both for the research programme and for the participants, researchers considered: the timing of interviews (e.g. before/after exams, before/after options – so that questions/answers were meaningful to students); the careful design of questions appropriate to their year group (whilst still keeping the longitudinal element to the project); and the structure of interviews always with open questions first.

The pupils were involved as individuals. The assurance of confidentiality, and anonymity in reports, was also important in students’ involvement. At the start of each interview, there was a standard preamble setting out: what would be covered, ‘not a test’, no right or wrong answers, why we were asking for their views, and how they would be used (e.g. put together with others’ views, anonymous if quotes are used, presented to those who are developing the curriculum). The questionnaire also stressed that it was their own views and opinions that were important, this was not a test, and there were no right or wrong answers. No specific provision for developing students’ skills was made. However, the researchers were skilled in listening to the young people, engaging them in the process, and allowing them to say what they felt. Many of the young people were very appreciative of the opportunity to have been involved over the years.

The interviews were designed so as to always gather ‘open’ responses first on a theme. Probes and prompts would ascertain further detail.

### **Who listens?**

The students spoke to the researchers. Confidentiality and anonymity were important to this research – it was only the researchers who listened to/saw the ‘raw’ data in this study. The pupil voice was central to this piece of research (to the researchers, and ultimately, the sponsors of the research).

At Key Stages 3 and 4, the school was felt to provide the best location for this research (a quiet room or office was used). At post-16, the research was located so as to be convenient for the young person involved (either at college, sixth form, workplace, home or other). In the latter case the young person had the choice of where the research should take place.



A selection of teachers was interviewed for the project (e.g. subject teachers, careers teachers, senior staff and so on). The focus of the research was on their views on the curriculum as specified, planned and mediated. In addition, teachers were asked for their perceptions of the pupils' experiences.

### **How are students kept up to date with outcomes of the process?**

The young people were not formally or directly fed back to by the researchers. However, each year, schools received individual feedback on their pupil survey responses compared with the full sample and with other similar school types.

In addition, the research was able to respond to the changing nature of educational policy contexts. For example, the final overview reported in the light of the most recent policy contexts, including;

- the discontinuation of the transfer test at age 11 (i.e. from primary to post-primary phase)
- the 14 – 19 debate, including more flexible learning pathways and the vocational agenda
- the proposed Key Stage 3 curriculum as set out in Pathways.

### **When do we listen?**

With this particular project, students' views were collected over a seven-year period, during which time the policy context for education and the curriculum developed and changed. In terms of the curriculum development cycle, the project was phased to complement other consultation and curriculum monitoring by CCEA. The research programme also coincided with, informed and responded to curriculum developments at Key Stage 3 (e.g. Pathways), and Key Stage 4 (e.g. Their Futures in Our Hands).

### **How do we ensure quality outcomes?**

In the NI Curriculum Cohort Study, the pupil experience and perspective was central to the research design, analysis and reporting. The case-study pupil voice was recorded and transcribed verbatim. Analyses used the pupil voice to describe their experience, and to help frame models, categories and typologies etc. Anonymised quotations were used in the reports.

The successes/priorities of this project were in tracking the same cohort of pupils' views throughout their schooling, providing a wealth of data over the years. Keeping the research 'fresh' and relevant to the young people *and* to the changing education policy context was important. This was addressed with each new phase/year of the project, by reworking interview schedules and so on. The final overview project considered the full set of data in the light of the most recent policy context (e.g. at 14–19, the discontinuation of the Transfer Test and new proposals for the Key Stage 3 curriculum, e.g. skills and capabilities for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and coherence across the curriculum, amongst other areas).

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## **CASE STUDY 7**

### ***Retention of Traveller pupils***

#### ***National Foundation for Educational Research***

#### **Aims of project**

This project would gather and report upon the personal reflections, accounts, expectations and aspirations of 44 Gypsy Traveller pupils over a three-year period, in order to:

identify the factors that may affect attitudes, levels of achievement and continued involvement in secondary education

identify associations and typologies which support and encourage Gypsy Traveller pupils to transfer successfully to secondary schools and continue to engage in formal education.

#### **Description of project**

The project involved the following 'phases':

the identification and approach to parents and children via LEA Traveller Education Service (TES) coordinators in order to draw up the sample

selection and recruitment of participants to the study

data collection each April and November throughout the three-year period

research analysis

production of report.

#### **Project outputs**

Derrington, C. and Kendall, S. (2004). *Gypsy Traveller Students in Secondary Schools: culture, identity and achievement*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

#### **Description of young people**

*Age range of students:* Year 6 to Year 9 (age 11–14).

*Sample population:* Gypsy Traveller students A sample of 50 was sought; in the event 44 students and their parents agreed to participate. A main criterion was that of being relatively settled in education – i.e. regularly engaged in primary school education for the two preceding years – so that factors associated with school engagement might be explored (rather than, say, access to schooling, which might be raised with, for example, more highly mobile groups).

**Methods to engage students:** The use of 'gatekeepers' e.g. TES coordinators to approach participants initially. Semi-structured, open-ended interviews carried out face-to-face. These took place in the summer term of Year 6, the autumn term of Year 8 and the spring term of Year 9.

#### **Publications / information available related to the project**

Bhopal, K. with Gundara, J., Jones, C. and Owen, C. (2000). *Working Towards Inclusive Education for Gypsy Traveller Pupils* (RR 238). London: DfEE.

Department for Education and Skills (2003). *Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Minority Ethnic Pupils*. London: DfES.

Kinder, K., Kendall, S., Halsey, K. and Atkinson, M. (1999). *Disaffection Talks*. Slough: NFER.

Rose, R. and Shevlin, M. (Eds) (2003). *Encouraging Voices: Respecting the insights of young people who have been marginalised*. Dublin: NDA.

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### **Why listen to and involve young people?**

The NFER Northern Office has a long track record in research focusing on the voice of young people. This has included a number of projects focusing on young people's views on disaffection and disengagement from learning (see publications above). We have also been involved in tracking the voice of vulnerable students.

In this particular project, it was taken that '*research about children is most meaningful when the children themselves are given the opportunity to articulate their own views, ideas and perceptions*' (cited in Rose and Shevlin, 2003). It was important that this group had their say and their voice heard – i.e. their reflections and personal accounts, expectations and aspirations. Significant others were also involved in the research (e.g. students' parents and teachers) in order to capture a holistic view.

At the outset, it was acknowledged that the issues surrounding secondary school attendance for Traveller children were 'complex'. '*The primary intention of this study was to enable Traveller students themselves to broaden our insight into the complexity of issues surrounding their continued engagement in school beyond the age of 11*' (Derrington and Kendall, 2004, p.6). It was also acknowledged that the researchers themselves were not travellers, and hence were outside of the participants' '*life-worlds*' and culture. The effect that this might have was recognised on two counts. Firstly, that the researchers themselves might be unable to '*get inside*' the participants' culture (p.7), and secondly that the participants responses might be influenced by the '*unnatural experience*' of being interviewed by a non-traveller. Hence for this particular project, the benefits of reporting the voices of participants verbatim (where possible) are many-fold.

### **Who do we listen to?**

A main criterion for the Traveller children participants was that of being 'relatively settled' in education – i.e. regularly engaged in primary school education for the two preceding years – so that factors associated with school engagement might be explored. (The

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inclusion of more highly mobile groups, for example, might reflect issues of access to schooling, rather than the focus of this research project.)

The particular backgrounds of the researchers involved in this project were important to the whole process of identification and approach. Their previous work with the Traveller community (e.g. in the LEA TES and in community work with Traveller children and women) facilitated contact with TES teams. These personnel acted as gatekeepers; they identified and approached parents and children about taking part. (In addition, initial agreement from the Directors of Education in each of the LEAs involved was sought – all gave permission for the research to be conducted.) All interviews were pre-arranged.

The particular young people group in this project was Traveller children. In order to ensure a variety of students were heard within this group, selection also took into account gender, type of living accommodation, siblings' experiences of secondary school, ability and parental attitudes. That the researchers were female was a possible positive factor in the research (e.g. interviewing mothers in their homes).

### **How do we listen?**

The project comprised a three-year longitudinal design – devised by the researchers in conjunction with the Advisory Group (made up of representative from Traveller organisations, TES, DfES, Ofsted, secondary schools and HE). An initial focus group discussion with TES coordinators produced a framework of themes as the basis to the interview schedules. As well as students, other participants were to be interviewed (e.g. parents, siblings, other adult relatives, primary school headteachers, class teachers, heads of year, SENCO, form tutors, TES staff, etc.). Hence, semi-structured open-ended interviews, based around the themes framework were designed by the researchers, so as to '*elicit a multi-perspective account*' and, where appropriate, for triangulation (p.9).

In addition, informal reviews with pupils and families took place across the duration of the project. Interviews were conducted in an informal manner. The longitudinal element presented the opportunity for researcher/participant relationships to build up over the three-year period. The students in the study were involved as individuals. Although semi-structured in design, the open-ended nature of the interview questions also provided the opportunity for participants to speak about the issues that concerned them.

The researchers recorded the pupil voice on tape; verbatim transcripts were made; and categories/typologies created grounded in the pupil voice itself. Verbatim quotes (anonymised, and any sensitive data 'removed') told the pupil voice throughout the report. The possible inability for the researchers to '*get inside*' the '*life-worlds*' of the young people was recognised. Hence, verbatim quotes tell the pupil voice throughout the report.

### **Who listens?**

The students spoke to researchers. The researchers and sponsors recognised from the outset that the student voice, alongside other voices, was central to this project and its outcomes.

Interviews with the students usually took place in their own homes. Some were interviewed in school. Interestingly, the interviews were not recorded in the first year of the project – as it was thought this might be daunting for those involved. This was not

found to be a problem, as had been anticipated. Permission to record was sought from the participants in the subsequent phases, providing the opportunity for verbatim (anonymised) voices to be heard. A range of teachers was interviewed in order to capture a multi-perspective account (see above).

### **When do we listen?**

This project involved the traveller pupil voice on schooling and learning, on their achievement and progress in education, and their attitudes, values, expectations and aspirations. This project is perhaps an important development within this field, in that it provides a longitudinal *and* a multi-perspective account.

In the context of pupil voice in curriculum development, we might ask: Are the methodologies for consultation on schooling, achievement and engagement transferable to consultation for curriculum development? What might a curriculum development cycle glean from research (including the pupil voice) in other educational arenas? Do we need to consult with young people to inform thinking and understanding before we consult to address 'change'?

### **How do we ensure quality outcomes?**

The key factors in engaging successfully with this group, highlighted throughout this case study, are drawn together here:

- the **underlying rationale** to the research that the **young people's views** would **broaden insights** into the issues relevant to the young people about engagement in school
- the researchers were **women** – important in the context of going into the homes of women and young people to conduct the research
- the researchers had **previously worked** with the Traveller Community (e.g. LEA TES and community work with Traveller children and women)
- the researchers were not travellers themselves – hence **verbatim** quotes describing the life-worlds of the participants was important
- the TES team acted as '**gatekeepers**' (i.e. personnel with contact and experience working with this group)
- interviews were always **pre-arranged**
- interviews were **not recorded in the first year** of the study; permission to record was sought in the second and third years of the study – possible with increased rapport/relationship between researcher and participant
- **multi-perspective** accounts were gained (for rich life-world accounts, and for triangulation of perspectives – although not in the sense of 'checking up')
- the research was **longitudinal** – relationships/**rapport** were built up between researchers and participants.

## **CASE STUDY 8**

### **National Institute for Public Education (OKI) European School Development Project**

#### **Aims of project**

The overall aim of the project was to contribute to better understanding and more effectively using school autonomy in different European countries.

#### Specific aims:

- developing a training material *Facing the Challenges of School Autonomy* for use by all participants in independent schools,
- building on the best practices of 5 different countries,
- developing the experiences of 30 pilot schools,
- creating an international website

#### **Description of project**

A three year project was subsidised by the EU. There were five countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, The Netherlands and Slovakia) participating in it.

#### **Project phases:**

1. Start up: defining the working tools for the analysis phase
2. Needs analysis
3. Identification of priorities for the training course – European workshop
4. Development of a training course
5. Pilot phase
6. Finalisation
7. Dissemination

While the legislation is different in each of the participating countries, each school has and every student feels different amount of autonomy. Working in teams with adults at a European level, those students, from different schools in different countries, could learn effectively from each other and also could learn how to improve their own abilities and potential.

#### **Project outputs:**

1. Report on the legal situation relating to school autonomy in the five countries
2. Collect of examples of best practice in school autonomy (three schools per participating country). See Appendix.
3. Identify priorities for the training course
4. Produce a series of instruments for the training course and website

5. Implement the training course (1 course in each of the participating countries) which will include subsequent evaluation and feedback on the training course design
6. Compile a final, evaluated product (training material and toolbox in six languages on the homepage)
7. Organise a final conference - Anchorage of the European training course on school-autonomy on a European level

### **Description of young people**

Students, ranging in age from 12 to 18 are participating in and providing feedback on national and international workshops and the national pilot courses.

### **Publications / information available related to the project**

A detailed account of the project along with the documentation relating to the various training modules is available on the ESDP project website.

[www.kulturkontakt.or.at/ESDP](http://www.kulturkontakt.or.at/ESDP)

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### **Why listen to and involve young people?**

There are no students in our agency, but we work with schools in different topics as we believe that students have a right to be involved in curriculum initiatives and also there is a policy requiring us to consult students. At most of these schools, students contribute to decisions in some way, they can represent their interest in different bodies and school leaders must confer with them in relation to particular topics.

In participating in projects such as this, students learn the skills which will assist them in discussion and debate, they learn to view their lives from different points of view and they are encouraged to think in a systematic/more holistic way. Student participation means that the project can become richer, can come closer to its participants, and the agency can better understand the different partners while developing an organisational culture of consultation. As a result of the project it is more likely that students will become more active and responsible citizens in the community.

### **Who do we listen to?**

In selection students for participation we had some specific criteria, such as: skills to communicate in English, being experienced in practicing autonomy, variety of geographical location, willingness to become involved. There were initially individual calls to school leaders, and they decided on the representatives of their schools.

### **How do we listen?**

In starting phase one day long workshops were organised in each participating school. Seven representatives (the head teacher, two teachers, two students, one parent and one critical friend) attended. Using the same plan in each project country, the task of facilitators was to help understanding and to clarify the concept of autonomy in different countries and schools. The next stage involved national and international workshops, to bring the organisational and national ideas to a European level. In these workshops participants worked with colleagues from different countries. Workshops were organised outside of the schools, in pleasant and comfortable venues and the costs were covered by the project budget.

Working with their age-group (from different schools) helped participating students to overcome their inhibitions, and showed them some common features of different schools. Working with their teachers and principals helped them to better understand their own school. The heterogeneous nature of the groups proved effective. The experiences of the adults and creativity of students made for a good working environment and a productive experience for all. On some occasions parallel programmes were organised for students, to explain particular topics or issues. In terms of training of students Project Managers organised special activities for them to assist them to participate in, for example, group work and role play. The information from the feedback and evaluation process was used in the planning of the activities for the next phases.

### **How are students kept up to date with outcomes of the process?**

Students were included and actively involved in the feedback process of the project. They reported to each other on tasks they had completed and also received feedback from project management and in some cases from teachers. Students also completed evaluation forms after participation in each activity.

### **How do we ensure quality outcomes?**

The project management and the school leaders have the responsibility for representing the student voice in subsequent decision making. However the project has no means of ensuring that the students' voice is not lost. Students and adults participating in the project encountered a number of challenges in trying to work together and to understand each others' perspectives but ultimately these were overcome during the project. Promotion practices which ensure greater mutual understanding should be a priority for the future. It is felt that number of courses launched in different countries would indicator of the success of the project as would the number of visitors to the homepage on the web.



## **Case Study 8; Appendix: Some examples of good practice**

### **PROCEDURE FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AND CONTROL TEACHER EVALUATION –**

Varga Katlin Secondary Grammar School, Szolnok, Hungary

#### **1. Area of Enforcement**

The procedure for quality assurance and control includes all the activities related to the evaluation and assessment of the pedagogical activity of teachers.

The aim of this evaluation is to provide feedback to teachers on their abilities and extent to which they can contribute to carrying out the tasks established in the Pedagogical Programme of the institution,

The procedure specifies:

- the time for the evaluation
- the area/components of evaluation
- how to make use of the evaluation results

#### **2. Course of procedure**

##### 2.1. Planning the activity of teacher evaluation

The pedagogical activity should be assessed:

- with a new member of the teaching staff in the year of his employment.
- with the members of the teaching staff who are employed for a definite period of time, in the year of the expiry of their contracts, in case of the extension of the validity of contracts (for temporary posts) or if the management plans to make them permanent (appointive posts).
- in all other cases on the basis of a plan made in advance, so that each member of the teaching staff should be evaluated at least once every seven years.

Taking into account the above points the principal makes an *Assessment Plan* in which she/he specifies:

- the names of the staff members to be assessed (at least 5-6 teachers every year)
- the name of the vice-principal and head of department responsible for the teachers assessed
- the deadline for the overall results
- the closing date for teacher evaluation procedure

The principal informs the staff on all details included in the assessment plan during the first staff meeting at the beginning of the school-year.

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## 2.2. Elements of teacher evaluation procedure

- self - evaluation
- student evaluation
- management evaluation

### 2.2.1. Self - evaluation

Self evaluation is made on the basis of a questionnaire. The principal is responsible for having the questionnaire drawn up and brought up-to-date after its regular (yearly) analysis by the management.

The *Self - evaluation questionnaire* should include the following areas:

- how the compulsory tasks have been carried out
- the progress made on the basis of course syllabus
- teacher-student, teacher-parent, teacher-teacher relations

The *Self - evaluation questionnaire* should be filled in on the last week of May and handed over to the principal, who concludes the results and informs the person concerned on the possible observations, personal remarks, conclusions.

### 2.2.2. Student evaluation

The evaluation is made by a random selection of students, with whom the teacher has had lessons during the year of evaluation. The group fills in the *Teacher evaluation questionnaire*.

Selecting the group of students who will evaluate the teacher is the task of the person responsible for quality assurance and control (Head of Quality Control).

The choice is made at random, for example every third student but at least 20 are selected from the list containing the names of all the students taught by the teacher evaluated. *The name - list of the students* selected and the corresponding number of questionnaires to be filled in are handed over to the teacher evaluated by the head of quality control at the end of April. The distribution of the questionnaires is the task of the teacher to be evaluated.

The questionnaires filled in are collected in a box. The head of quality control checks them and performs the analysis and evaluation. Then an overall *Report* is prepared and handed over to the principal. At the end of the evaluation procedure the teacher evaluated receives the copies of the *Teacher evaluation questionnaire*. It is also the responsibility of the principal to bring the *Teacher evaluation questionnaire* up-to-date. She/he will have to take into consideration the opinion of the representatives of student association.

### 2.2.3. Management evaluation

Management evaluation is carried out by the principal, vice-principal, head of quality control and head of department, responsible for the teaching activity of the person evaluated. The areas to be considered are:

- correctness of documentation (regular & precise recording of data)
- class activity
- achievements (competitions, language exams, school leaving exam results, entrance exam results)

Checking the correctness of documentation is done on the basis of terms specified in the Assessment plan and a record of the findings is made in the *Register of evaluation*.

Class activity is assessed in the course of at least 3 inspections carried out during a school year by the principal and vice-principal. Independent of their inspections, at least 3 lessons are observed and evaluated by the head of department responsible for the teaching activity of the person evaluated. A timetable is agreed on for the inspections to be made but it is essential to have the checks at regular intervals from September to June. The evaluation of the lesson is started with the filling in the data included in the *Lesson evaluation sheet*. At the end of the lesson the teacher under observation makes an appointment for a follow – up discussion (to be based on the evaluative comments of the supervisor and teacher). Finally the *Lesson evaluation sheet* filled in is handed over to the head of quality control.

The vice–principal is in charge of collecting the data related to the achievements of the teacher under observation (the data refer to the grades obtained at the school leaving exam, entrance exam and school report results of the students who the teacher under observation has been working with for the last 3 years). A comparison of the school reports and school leaving exam results of the 4 - year students should be made. The overall results should be handed over to the principal at the end of May.

### 2.3. Exploring the results of lesson observation

The head of quality control is in charge of collecting the data, their evaluation & the aggregation of the results obtained during the observation procedure, as well as for their being handed over to the principal in the time specified in the assessment plan. The closing date for the observation and evaluation is in June, on the day previously specified in the assessment plan. The evaluation is made in a discussion session on the basis of a written proposal by the principal which is based on all the information collected during the observation period. The participants to the session are the:

- teacher under observation
- principal
- vice-principal concerned
- head of department concerned / (responsible for the teacher's activity)
- the head of quality control

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The conclusions made at the discussion session are entered in the *Minute-book*. The recording includes:

- strengths of the teacher's competence and the values to be further preserved
- areas to be developed
- possible need for retraining
- further exploration of possible problems and the remedies suggested together with the deadline and the name of the person responsible for checking if the instructions given have been carried out.

Only the remarks, which have the consent of at least 3 participants to the discussion-session, may be entered in the *Minute-book*. The information contained in the *Minute-book* cannot be made public. It is included only in the personal documents of the teacher evaluated.

### 3. Handling of Documents

Documentation	Person entrusted	Stored until	Observation
Self-evaluation questionnaire - completed	Head of quality control	3 years	-
List of students selected to carry out the evaluation	Head of quality control	1 year	-
Teacher evaluation questionnaire - completed	Head of quality control	Closing date of the observation evaluation	-
Register of evaluation	Vice-principal	Permanent	-
Lesson observation and evaluation sheet - completed	Head of quality control	3 years	-
Report	Head of quality control	3 years	-
Minute-book	School secretary	Permanent	Personal documents

## Case Study 8; Appendix 2.

### How the Students' Union works at Illyés Gyula Secondary Grammar School in Budaörs, Hungary

We think that in our school one of the most important and best practices is the Students' Union (in the followings S. U.), because it works quite well, and I think it is better than in the most of the schools in Hungary or maybe in Europe. This is the main reason, why I am writing about it as our best practice. Now, I would like to introduce the main parts of our S. U. These are the followings:

***The Senate – the decision-maker:*** Every Class sends a senator and a vice - senator into the Senate. Both of them are elected by the class, and their commission last for one year. The Vice – President is the chairman of the Senate, and he/she conducts the meetings. The suggestions are discussed in an open debate and then the Senate votes in the system of the “simple majority”.

***The President and his/her Cabinet, the Government – the executive:*** The President cannot make his/her own executive decisions but can only give orders to execute something that has been accepted by the Senate. The making of connections with other organisations and S. U's is part of his/her duty. The President and the Vice – President are elected by the students.

***The Court – the justice dispenser:*** In the problematic affairs of the students the Court decides. It has seven members, who are elected by every grade. The Court makes his own decisions in total consensus. The Court's power affects on every student.

#### Why does our S. U. work better than others do?

- The members of the S. U. are serious and intelligent. The Government also sends them for further trainings and so that they become experienced in the affairs related to the S.U. That is the main reason why they can do their jobs effectively and well.
- The Government is also well – trained, and the communication with the students has been getting better in the last years, so they know that the S. U. is very important.
- The Teachers help where they can, so the S. U. gets on well with the Teaching Staff. In most cases the S. U. can reach consensus with Teachers.
- The Teachers are beginning to understand the Students, to trust them, and trying to work with them as equal partners.
- The S. U. has objectives and knows how to reach them or how to get help to reach them.

## **CASE STUDY 9**

### ***What do talented students want?***

#### ***SLO, Netherlands***

#### **Aims of project**

This project will:

1. give developers of educational materials information about how gifted and talented education programmes are organised within the schools participating in the project
2. give a representation of the target group (schools and teachers as well as students, because both will use the educational materials to be developed within the framework of the project)
3. supply teachers and developers of educational materials with concrete information about themes and working procedures (methods) that meet the wishes and needs of talented pupils.
4. involve students' opinions within the process of development of educational material
5. give students the feeling that their opinions on education are taken into account and that by thinking about education and giving their opinion on it they can actually influence the process of educational design.

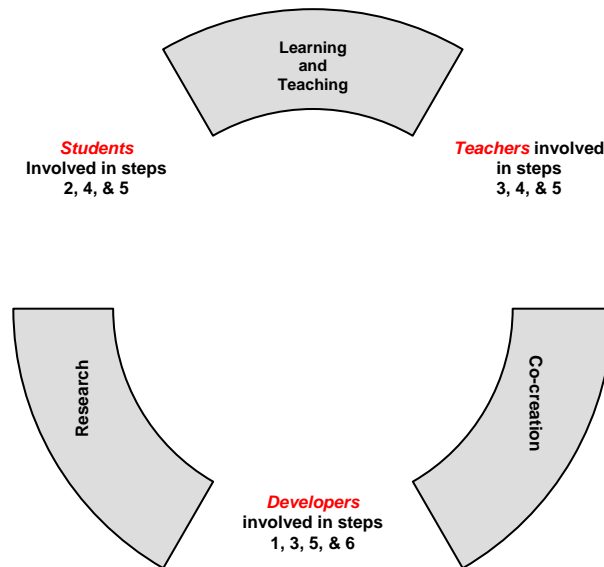
#### **Description of project**

The SLO-project 'Talented and gifted students in the lower classes of secondary education' develops educational materials for 3 different teaching areas: humans & nature, humans & society, and art & culture.

In this project teachers of several different schools work together with SLO-developers in creating (co-creation) challenging tasks for gifted and talented students in the lower classes of pre-university education for each one of these 3 areas. Teachers are asked to give suggestions and feedback during the developing process. They will test the developed tasks in their schools and evaluate them with the students. The students are asked to give feedback through a questionnaire. Experiences of both students and teachers working with the tasks are reported to the SLO-developers and are used for revision of the tasks.

The sequence of steps in the project is as follows:

1. set of criteria for challenging tasks (extracted from literature studies)
2. consulting pupils
3. developing tasks in cooperation with teachers
4. pilot (learning and teaching)
5. evaluation with pupils and teachers
6. revision of material



### Project phases:

#### Input:

1. Drawing up questionnaires for the interviews. The questionnaires are based on:
  - a list of characteristics of educational materials for talented students (extracted from earlier literature studies)
  - input from SLO-developers involved in the talented and gifted project

#### Carrying out / progress:

2. Visiting of 7 schools (6 of them participating in the gifted and talented project of the SLO). Interviews of approximately one hour are held with:
  - teachers involved in gifted and talented programmes (some schools already have several years of experience with such programmes, while others are now starting or intend to do so)
  - mixed groups of 6 students. Teachers are asked to select students for the interview that will be representative of the project target group.

#### Output:

3. The results from the interviews are reported and points of interest are brought to the attention of teachers and developers participating in the talented and gifted project during a meeting. The points are discussed in the subgroups consisting of teachers and developers involved in developing educational material for the different teaching areas and taken into account in the designing process.

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#### Input:

4. Drawing up questionnaires for the written poll. The questionnaires are based on:
  - significant results from the interviews
  - developers' questions regarding students' preferences in areas such as: working procedures and methodologies; teaching areas; sources; products and results; group- and individual work; guidance.

#### Progress:

5. The poll is carried out among 116 students divided over 7 schools (6 of them participating in the gifted and talented project of the SLO). The participating students are representative of the project's target group, that is: students in the age of 11-13 years old from pre-university education classes (VWO), taking part in the talented and gifted programme or students eligible for such a programme based on their school results.

#### Output:

6. The results and conclusions from the interviews and polls are reported and points of interest are brought to the attention of teachers and developers participating in the talented and gifted project during a meeting. The points are discussed in the subgroups consisting of teachers and developers involved in developing educational material for the different teaching areas and taken into account in the completion phase of the designing process.
7. The outcomes of the research as a whole can be viewed on the SLO-website and can be used as background information and inspiration by teachers of talented and gifted students and developers of educational materials for this target group.

### **Description of young people**

Age range of students:

Students in the age of 11-13 years old from pre-university education classes (VWO), taking part in the talented and gifted programme or students eligible for such a programme based on their school results and preferably with different interests.

### **Publications / information available related to the project**

- Bonset, H. en Bergsma, S. *Hoogbegaafde leerlingen en het vak Nederlands*. Enschede: SLO.
- Onderwijsraad (2004, januari). *De stand van educatief Nederland*.
- Onderwijsraad (2004, mei). *Hoe kan onderwijs meer betekenen voor jongeren*.
- Span, P., de Bruin- de Boer, A.L. en Wijnekus, M.C. (2001). *Het testen van begaafde kinderen. Suggesties voor diagnostiek en behandeling*. Alphen aan de Rijn: Samsom.

### **Contact details**



Manager of the SLO-project *Hoogbegaafden in de onderbouw* (talented and gifted in the lower classes of secondary education) is Dirkje Ebbers: [D.Ebbers@slo.nl](mailto:D.Ebbers@slo.nl)

Further information about the talented and gifted project, the developed educational material and the research report can be found on the site:

[www.slo.nl](http://www.slo.nl) / VO / schoolbrede thema's - hoogbegaafden - vakoverstijgende verrijkingstaken/

Title of report...*Wat willen leerlingen die mer Kunnen en willen*

### **Why listen to and involve young people?**

Student participation has become more and more of an issue within educational policy. Student-centred educational approaches are being implemented by a number of schools and various institutions are initiating projects concerning student participation.

The benefits accruing from student involvement in the project include;

- students : learning opportunities, preparation for future life
- organisation: being able to improve educational tools and respond to needs and wishes of users (teachers and students), beneficial PR
- community / society: (in the future) more involved citizens

There was no particular focus on marginalised children however, schools have the option to focus on marginalised children if they choose to do so.

### **Who do we listen to?**

Schools offering special programmes for talented and gifted students or wanting to do so in the future could participate in the project. In each school one or more teachers engaged in this programme participated in the designing process of educational materials for the target group and were asked to give suggestions and feedback.

Teachers themselves were interviewed about their experiences with the organisation and the talented and gifted programme in their school and were asked what they thought the students' opinions of the programme would be. In addition, they were asked to select a group of students representing the target group of talented students for whom the material was meant: students aged 11-13 years from pre-university education classes (VWO), taking part in the talented and gifted programme or students eligible for such a programme based on their school results.

Differences exist between participating schools in the organisation of programmes for talented and gifted students and the procedures for selecting students for these programmes. Therefore, in some schools students participating in this research are in the same class, whereas in other schools they are from different classes.

In each school teachers were asked to select 6 students, preferably mixed groups: boys and girls with alpha as well as beta preferences. At this stage decisions as to how to involve young people were taken by adults for pragmatic reasons

### **How do we listen?**

To ensure students' opinions were involved optimally in the developing process, we decided to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. In-depth interviews were followed up by a poll, enabling us to verify outcomes of the interviews in combination with new questions forthcoming from the developing process amongst larger groups of students.

Students, representatives of a group in their school, were interviewed by somebody not related to school in order to motivate students to speak as freely as possible about whether or not they are satisfied with the current programme, teaching methods, educational tools, guidance etc.

The interviews were recorded and reported unedited. The reports (with fictitious names to ensure student's privacy) are available as supplements of the research.

In this research the way of involving students, the making of questionnaires and execution of the interviews depended solely on adults. Even though outcomes were interesting it would be desirable to give students a more active role in the design and execution of the research in order to stimulate depth and creative solutions being brought on.

### **Who listens?**

For logistical reasons schools presented the best option in terms of a location for consulting students.

The information was then submitted to teachers and developers engaged in the project. The complete report has been made available at the SLO-site. Feedback and suggestions from students on the educational material could be used as leads and inspiration in the developing process. More generally students' feedback could also be used to revise and adjust existing material and inspire teachers working with talented and gifted students (customer-oriented approach).

### **How are students kept up to date with outcomes of the process?**

Students were informed about the goals of the interview and poll and were set realistic targets and expectations.

They were kept updated on the outcomes by their teacher being part of the developing process. A copy of the final report, together with a letter thanking students for their participation was handed out to the teachers. Students could have access to the report through the site. However communication with students about the outcomes and impact of their contributions was not specifically guided.

### **How do we ensure quality outcomes?**

The unedited report of the interviews was attached as a supplement of the research report. Students' statements on several subjects were presented to teachers and developers.

The challenges for the project were to develop educational material geared as much as possible to the students' perception of their environment; to take into account students' opinions; to meet wishes and needs of the target group; to use ideas and themes students suggest as leads and inspiration source for development of educational material.

Success for the project included the generation of examples of different types programmes in schools for talented and gifted students, illustrated with teachers' and students' experiences of the programme; a view on preferences and needs regarding education of talented and gifted students; an illustration of characteristics that the educational material for this group should comply with; a start in communicating with students about their needs and wishes concerning education.

Success for students came with having the feeling that their ideas are taken seriously and they can actually make a change.

There is no evaluation as such. The focus of the project is on using the outcomes of the student involvement rather than evaluating the procedure. Nevertheless we want to use the suggestion to be more explicit about it.

A number of priorities present themselves as a result of the project.

- Students should be properly prepared for this more active role in the process: they should receive tools and guidance in advance in order to think about educational material and formulate workable ideas about it.
- New structures are needed to involve students in a more active role in the developing process of educational material.

In the case of this project the emphasis was on the initial phase of the development process. However, it would be desirable to involve students not merely in this stage but to keep them involved and updated during the elaboration. Maximum communication about the project and the process should be ensured to guarantee the student's motivation to participate.

## **CASE STUDY 10**

### **Ask the student! (vraag het de leerling!)**

#### **SLO, Netherlands**

#### **Aims of project**

This project will:

- Enable students (age 12-14) to do a whole school evaluation, collect data by using web-based tools, involving peers, presenting results by using a PR strategy and providing the school management recommendations for improvement.
- Students are challenged to use diverse social skills such as discussions, groupwork, as well as research skills such as selecting questions, making a planning, selecting methods, process data and using creative thinking skills to do recommendations.
- Students are given the opportunity to be involved in improving the quality of their study-place and being able to have an influence on decision-making (active citizenship).

#### **Description of project**

Project phases:

the project takes 2-4 hours per week, per student during about 4 months. The main phases are;

- preparing: select a teacher and a group of students, decide on project period (school manager)
- getting started: draw plans; selecting topics and tools, start promotion of project (students and assisting teacher)
- collecting and processing data amongst peers (questionnaires, debate, panels)
- process data;
- start work on project website, give an interim report to school leader, find new targets for further inquiries;
- deciding on recommendations; internal and external PR; Putting results on website.
- discuss and recommendations with school management, deciding on follow-up

#### **Project outputs:**

- Evaluation report on how students view different items such as: school atmosphere / climate; teaching staff; counseling; the building; learning materials incl. ICT.
- Recommendations to the school management;
- Impuls to enhance discussion and communication within school;
- participation skills for students and teachers;

- Positive PR for school;
- Input for visit by inspection (optional).

### **Description of young people**

Age range of students: 14-15

**Methods to engage students:** giving them a responsibility for the improvement of their school. The students put effort in communicating their work with peers and prepare recommendations to the school managers. This makes their work transparent and real.

### **Publications/ information available to the project**

Publications:

[www.vraaghetdeleerling.kennisnet.nl](http://www.vraaghetdeleerling.kennisnet.nl)

### **Contact details**

The project was initiated by the inspectorate. After a pilot it was taken over by the central internet site for education in the Netherlands (kennisnet.nl).

### **Why listen to and involve young people?**

The educational policy in the Netherlands emphasises school autonomy and a pupil-centred curriculum. As a result of this, schools want to show the community how they stand out from the rest. Positive PR is important to attract new pupils. Schools are also looking for ways to involve students in the improvement of the school. Through the project the staff gets a better insight in the opinions of the students.

The benefits accruing from student involvement in the project include;

- students : learning opportunities, preparation for future life, a better school;
- organisation: positive PR;
- community / society: in future: more involved citizens.

### **Who do we listen to?**

Pilot schools were selected by the inspectorate on a voluntary basis. The pilot phase has ended and project is now open to all schools (web-based) and promoted amongst school leaders and student bodies. Schools decide for themselves if they want to carry out the project.

Within a participating school, students were selected by different means: teachers could advise on the selection. In some cases all students selected came from one class, whereas in other cases students came from different classes. Taking students from one class has the advantage that a greater variety of students gets involved in the heart of the work, and the students know each other. But the risk is that it remains the project of one class and other students will not be committed. When choosing students from

Including the student voice in curriculum development and review

different classes, it offers possibilities to use them as an ambassador for their class and give the class the function of an advisory party.

It is then part of the task for these selected students to listen to other students through panel sessions and questionnaires.

### **How do we listen?**

In the design and operation of this initiative students were seen as researchers so as to ensure maximum student participation in terms of controlling the process, the execution of the different steps

Assistance was provided by a coordinating teacher. Otherwise all tools were prepared for the pupils to use, or adapt. This ensures that the pupils can focus on the actual research: collecting data, analysing and drawing conclusions, rather than on methodology.

Younger students in particular needed more help from the coordinating teacher. Older students worked more independently.

### **Who listens?**

Students present the outcomes to the school-leader but the report is also made available to teaching staff, students and often the wider community by using internal and external means of communication (website / press release).

It is recognised that receiving well organised feedback of students to improve the school organisation is valuable. However, to avoid tokenism, efforts have to be made to ensure that implementation takes place. The school management should communicate this, but some sort of monitoring is recommended.

### **How are students kept up to date with outcomes of the process?**

The school leader will give feedback to the students on the report and recommendations on the website.

### **When do we listen?**

In order to accommodate greater levels of student involvement it is necessary to make sure that all efforts are made for the student-researchers to involve as many other students as possible in the process and to ensure maximum communication about the project and the progress that is made. In this case the students are most effectively involved in the review and the evaluation.

### **How do we ensure quality outcomes?**

It depends on the school situation: the school leader and the assisting teacher. Students make a stronger case if they invest in communicating their work to the other students in the school. Part of the package are ways to communicate within and outside the school (website + PR tools).

Student-written report is the principal means of recording the outcomes and decisions. A written reaction to the outcomes by the school manager is part of the project. Putting the recommendations into practice is one of the steps in the program, but this needs further elaboration. For example a monitoring group could be formed, consisting of the teacher

that assisted the working group and representatives of students and parents, and if possible an outsider to the school (local business or authority).

The project has had the following;

Challenges: (on the school level)

- keeping the students involved in a long term project (4 months)
- thinking positively and not only criticize
- communicate with peers and the school manager
- being effective
- raising interests by new schools
- turning interest into adoption of the project
- giving personal support to schools, next to the web-based services
- adding the learning and teaching process to the items for the school evaluation.

Successes: (overall implementation aim)

- a set of positive case studies
- good results in the participating schools.

Including the student voice in curriculum development and review

### **Appendix 3; List of participants**

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John Halbert	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, NCCA Ireland
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Sarah Fitzpatrick	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, NCCA, Ireland
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Verity Donnelly	Department for Education and Lifelong Skills, DELLS, Wales