Children and Young People in Care’s Participation in Collective Decision Making Processes.

Rebecca Jackson UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway
Today’s Aim

➢ Rationale for Research
➢ Processes
➢ Emerging Themes
Background to the Study

UNCRC(1989) Rights of the Child

PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

Article 12: requires that all children and young people should have a say in matters that affect them and that their views should be given due weight with regard given to their age and maturity.

Article 2: Non discrimination

Article 3: Best Interests

Article 5: Right to Guidance

Article 13: Right to Information

Article 19: Right to be safe

Child(-18) as a full human being with integrity and personality and the ability to participate freely in society (Lundy, 2007).
Development of Policy and Practice.

1. OUR CHILDREN THEIR LIVES (DCYA, 2000).
2. BETTER OUTCOMES BRIGHTER FUTURES (DCYA, 2014).
3. NATIONAL CHILDREN’S PARTICIPATION STRATEGY (DCYA, 2015).
5. ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL POLICY AND PRACTICE: TUSLA’S DEVELOPMENT OF PARTICIPATIVE OPPORTUNITIES IN POLICY AND PRACTICE.
Theoretical Frame: Evaluation of Attainment of Participative Rights

“Voice is not Enough” (Lundy, 2007)

Space: Provide a safe and inclusive space for children and young people to express their views.

Voice: Provide appropriate Information and facilitate the expression of views.

Audience: Ensure their views are communicated to someone with the power to make decisions.

Influence: Ensure that children’s views are taken seriously and acted upon where appropriate.

Used for development of research tools and as an analytical frame to explore depth of participation.
Why should Children and Young People Participate in Decision Making?

- Advantages relating to the participation of children and young people in care in policy development and service provision decisions.
  - Protection (Ryan Report, 2009)
  - Wellbeing (Emerson & Lloyd, 2016)
  - Self Esteem (Thomas & Percy Smith, 2010:493)
  - Improved Policy (Thomas, 2007: 201-2).
  - Improved Practice
  - Improved Service Delivery (Seim and Slettebø 2011:498)
Children and young people in care have a right to participate in decisions that affect them.

Primary mechanism to date = Individual case conferences & complaints

Issues identified by children and young people:
1. Preparation and Ability to Input in meetings
2. Relationship with Social Worker
3. Nature of Case Conference Problematic
4. Feeling views were not listened too
5. Lack of Consultation with Care Planning
6. Benefits of Advocacy

(Mc Evoy & Smith 2011 & Daly, 2014).
Fora designed to facilitate children and young people to have their voices heard through meaningful collaborative process.

**Goals:**
1. Empowerment
2. Listen to Direct Experience
3. Positive Challenges identified in care system
4. Influence Policy and Practice
5. Informal Support through Interactive Group Process
6. Have fun!!!!

- Wide range of participants from rural and urban areas, ranging in age from 8-18 years old. Children from (residential?) and foster care models of care represented.

- Advocate supported
Aims and Objectives

- **Aim:** to explore the extent to which the fora established by EPIC, in partnership with Tusla, facilitate the collective participation of children and young people in care and influence Tusla policy and practice.

**Objectives:**

- To describe the model of collective participation developed by EPIC and provide an operational profile of the established fora.

- To explore the perspectives of stakeholders (including young people, EPIC and Tusla staff and management) regarding their experiences of involvement with the fora.

- To assess if the fora have facilitated a safe and inclusive space for children and young people in care to communicate their views.

- To assess if the fora enabled children and young people in care to communicate their views to Tusla management and whether their views were taken seriously.

- To reflect on the learning in relation to the collective participation of children and young people in care in an Irish context and to make recommendations for future work in this area.
Methodology

Comparative Cross Sectional Design with Case Study Elements: aims to generate rich qualitative data on context specific phenomena across area based initiatives that differ from each other in a number of key variables.

- Multi-method Qualitative study:
  
1. Focus Groups: Child and youth aspect of this study will utilise participatory methods to inform research tool development, and analysis of emerging themes.
2. Semi-structured Interviews: Will utilise Lundy’s (2007) model to explore the depth of participative rights achieved.
Methodology: Participatory Research

• Beneficial for the development of social policy, as analysis of children’s own understandings of social conditions of childhood is an important precondition for considering appropriate policies that enable children to live better lives (Mayall, 2008).

• Research underpinned by rights based practice and framework, therefore participatory research methods most apt.

• Acknowledges children and young peoples need for information, guidance, differential capacities and forms of communication and provides opportunity for ongoing consent and assent (Lundy and McEvoy, 2011 & O’Kane, 2008).
Collective Participation may allow patterns of experience to be known, thus facilitating policy and practice change.

Social Support is important to children and young people in care!!!
Thank you for listening!

r.jackson1@nuigalway.ie

http://www.childandfamilyresearch.ie/

http://www.childandfamilyresearch.ie/cfrc/mainstream/theworkpack
ageapproach/childrensparticipation/