Involving Children in Decision-Making: the Lundy Model

Professor Laura Lundy
Centre for Children’s Rights
www.qub.ac.uk/child
@CHILDRIGHTSQUB
The UNCRC provides a powerful frame for understanding child participation

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

Article 12(1) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
Who does it apply to?

A RIGHT OF INDIVIDUALS AND A RIGHT OF GROUPS OF CHILDREN
What decisions does it apply to?

‘A wide interpretation of matters affecting the child and children helps to include children in the social processes of their community and society. Thus, States parties should carefully listen to children’s views wherever their perspective can enhance the quality of solutions.’

Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009)
A disconnect between law, children’s experiences and adults’ understanding

The legal text of Article 12

Adults’ focus on the ‘voice of the child’

A boy not getting a say in a conversation.
What does Article 12 require?

“Each of these abbreviations is an imperfect summary and can potentially undermine its implementation.”
Voice is not enough...

Lundy (2007)
“Voice” is not enough

• **SPACE:** Children must be given the opportunity to express a view
• **VOICE:** Children must be facilitated to express their views
• **AUDIENCE:** The view must be listened to.
• **INFLUENCE:** The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.
SPACE
“assure to the child”

Needs to be actively created – the obligation is to “assure” the right to the child...

Needs to be a “safe” space (Art. 19)

Needs to be inclusive (Art. 2)
VOICE
“the right to express a view freely”

A right not a duty
Choice in the mode of expression
Afforded to all children “capable of forming a view”
May need to be helped to both form and express their views
AUDIENCE

“the views of the child being given due weight”

More than just the “right to be heard”

Need to be actively listened to

May need formal channels of communication - a right of audience.
INFLUENCE

“due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child”

Ensure there is a formal response

Should be given feedback about the extent of influence they have had.

“Create the conditions where it is uncomfortable for adults to solicit children’s views and then ignore them”.

The Lundy Model in practice.

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ITS APPEAL

• “Legally sound and user-friendly”

• Intended to capture the qualities of rights-based participation rather than different forms or levels of participation

• Concepts are fluid and flexible: can apply to any form of participation for all children in any arena of decision-making
Ireland’s National Child and Youth Participation Strategy (2015)
2.8
(14.5)
All bodies responsible for the delivery of Local Area Plans (LAPs) will be required to ensure the direct participation of local children and young people in the aspects of the LAP relevant to their lives.

2.9
The participation of local children and young people in the development of play spaces and play facilities will continue to be included as a criterion of funding for DCYA Capital Grant Funding for Play and Recreation.

2.10
(14.8)
All national initiatives for children in library services will continue to be designed to incorporate effective ways of obtaining children’s feedback on their experiences of those initiatives.

2.11
(14.12)
The views expressed by children and young people on the services provided to them under the Smarter Travel and Bike Week programmes will be monitored and recorded, and used to inform policy on these services.

2.12
Commence planning to develop a toolkit for consulting with children and young people and make it available to all national governing bodies of sport for implementation at club level in 2021.
Mapping good practice.
**Article 12: I have the right to be listened to, and taken seriously**

Have you remembered...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPACE</th>
<th>VOICE</th>
<th>AUDIENCE</th>
<th>INFLUENCE</th>
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We want every young person in Leicester to have:

- **A safe space**: somewhere to talk and where you can think about and share your ideas
- **A Voice**: so you can tell us your feelings and wishes in a way that suits you
- **An Audience**: so that what you say is listened to by the right people at the right time
- **Influence**: we want your ideas to be used where they can
- **Impact**: we want you to know how your ideas will make a difference

#ThisIsParticipation - have your say
Tash, 17 from Leicester.

Personally – the concept of space, audience, voice and influence can make a massive impact. Alone, they are relatively small things, easy to implement but collectively making a world a difference. To be able to make choices within this group for not only myself but for other young people in care is so incredibly liberating and important and for me this perfectly represents voice. But voice doesn’t have to be this profound or difficult – it can simply consist of having someone to talk to and being heard and considered. Space is feeling safe and steady – having a ‘home’ or a safe place to be able to connect with yourself and your feelings in a way that is productive and honest. Audience is the idea of being able to communicate the ideas to someone who can help and make a difference. Living in care is hard but having no one to talk to is harder. A foster carer, social worker, member of the council or even a teacher can make all the difference – it again links to the idea of voice and being heard. Influence is not always about seeing change but also knowing why things may not be able to change. The way that is communicated is so important so regardless of the outcome, being able to know that you were able to have your say and even have the ability to have some type of influence is so powerful. Despite all these stages being separate, they are also inextricably linked – to be able to satisfy one, is the ability to eventually satisfy all.'
Involving children in governance
THERE IS NO ONE RIGHT WAY
SOME MYTHS

MYTHS THAT ARE BELIEVED IN TEND TO BECOME TRUE

GEORGE ORWELL
ADULTS KNOW BEST
CHILDREN ARE THE EXPERTS IN THEIR OWN LIVES
The child should not be allowed to opt out of something that will 'undermine life choices or impair life interests in an irreparable way.' (Freeman, 1996)
YOU MEAN TO TELL ME

THAT SPOONS DONT ACTUALLY
SOUND LIKE AIRPLANES

"THEY ARE TOO YOUNG"
“THEY ARE NOT REPRESENTATIVE”
IT WOULD TAKE TOO MUCH TIME/ COST TOO MUCH MONEY
The Reality of Participation?

Good
Fast
Cheap

Choose TWO!
IT WOULD BE TOKENISTIC...
Participation is always imperfect

‘Tokenism’ may be a start.
“It’s not the gift of adults. It’s the right of the child”

(Lundy 2007)
What strategies can be deployed for securing (the greater likelihood) of influence?
Making ‘meaningful engagement’ a meaningful term

In 2007, trying to articulate the concept of influence, I settled, as others do, on feedback:

“... make it uncomfortable for adults to solicit children’s views and then ignore them...”

Lundy, 2007
What did you agree with that I said?

What, if anything, surprised you and why?

Did you disagree with anything? If so, what and why?

Has it influenced your views in any way? If so, how?

What have you decided?

What is happening next and when will it happen?