



The Learning Institute

Why listen to children and young people? Part One: An introduction

Overview

The right of a child or young person to be listened to and taken seriously whenever decisions are made that affect them, is one that is accepted by almost every country. This CPD explores why it is vital to involve children and young people, both individually and collectively, in their own learning and in the life of their communities.

Target audience

Multi-disciplinary contexts

Duration

Approximately 1 hour

The Learning Institute provides opportunities for individuals and communities through high quality education, training and research programmes that challenge personal barriers and promote social inclusion. To find out more, please get in touch.

Introduction

Children and young people are at the centre of our practice, so it is vital to have an understanding of why it is important to listen to them, and ways to do this effectively.

Objectives

- examine the relevant human rights legislation that underpins our work with children and young people
- explore why listening to children and young people matters
- identify some practical ways to do this effectively

Resources

Pen and paper for note taking

Internet access to following:

- The Importance of Student Voice [Tedx Talk], available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVALo-96gAA
- The shift from engaging students to empowering learners [video], available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYBJQ5rIFjA
- Seven Golden Rules for Participation produced by the Children and Young Peoples' Commissioner Scotland [document], available at <https://cypcs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Golden-Rules-children.pdf>

Task 1: What does the legislation say?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) came into force in the UK in 1992. It is the most widely and rapidly ratified treaty in history. This is a paraphrase of Article Twelve:

Every child who is capable of forming his or her own views has the right to express their views, freely in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Spend a few minutes thinking about your response to this, and about what it means for you in your professional context. Consider for example:

- Some of the ways your setting addresses this right in practice, and any challenges it may face.
- How capability, age and maturity may affect how a child's views are taken into account. Does this mean some children have no right to a voice? (This is explored in more detail in Part 2 of this CPD- All Voices Matter.)

Task 2: Why is it important?

Access *The Importance of Student Voice*, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVALo-96gAA. This is a TEDx Talk [approx. 6 minutes] given by Donivan Ryan, an American student (although his experience is within the US education system, his talk is still relevant to UK).02

Before you watch the clip, look below at some of the key words used and try to predict some of the things he will say.

empowerment dictating motivation engaging accountability unique perspective

Now watch the clip and see if your predictions were right- using these key words, write a short summary of his views. How far do you agree with these?

Ryan gives an example of how his voice made a positive change in his learning environment. Use your own professional or personal experience to note down other specific examples of this.

Task 3: Do we need to change the way we see things?

Access *The shift from engaging students to empowering learners* [approx. 2 minutes] available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYBJQ5rIFjA. John Spencer is a US professor of creative education. (**key term:** paradigm shift - a fundamental change in the way we think about or see something)

In your own words, explain what Spencer argues about the difference between engagement and empowerment, and the link between empowerment and creativity. How far do you agree?

Use your own professional or personal experience to add specific examples of this in practice to your list from Task 2.

Task 4: How can we as practitioners help?

Spend some time reflecting on these questions:

1. How can we educate ourselves and the children we work with about the rights outlined in the UNCRC?
2. How do we make sure each individual child has their own voice?
3. How can we make sure we give children and young people real choices?
4. How can we make sure children know their voices have been heard and that it has made a difference?
5. Sometimes it is hard for children and young people to express what they think or feel. How can we help them?
6. What do you think shared respect between children, young people and adults looks like?
7. How can we keep children and young people informed about what happens once they have given their views?

Each question relates to one of the Seven Golden Rules for Participation, produced by the Children and Young Peoples' Commissioner Scotland. These can be accessed here:

<https://cypcs.org.uk/wpcypcs/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Golden-Rules-children.pdf>

Read the detail of what each rule means in practice (in the sections with yellow arrows next to them). How do these compare with your own reflections on the questions? Which suggestions will you take on board in your own practice?

Task 5: Reflection on learning

Note down your responses to the following questions:

- What knowledge did I already have that has been refreshed by this CPD?
- How has this CPD developed my knowledge and understanding?
- How can I apply what I now know to my practice?

Sources

Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland (2020) *Golden Rules for Participation*.

Available at: <https://cypcs.org.uk/wpcypcs/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Golden-Rules-children.pdf>

(Accessed: 8 July 2020)

John Spencer (2017) *The shift from engaging students to empowering learners*. Available at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYBJQ5rIFjA> (Accessed: 9 July 2020)

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> (Accessed: 8 July 2020)

TEDx Talks (2013) *The importance of student voice: Donivan Ryan at*

TEDxRockyViewSchoolsED. 14 October. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVALo-](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVALo-96gAA)

[96gAA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVALo-96gAA) (Accessed: 9 July 2020)

Further reading

To find out more about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, go to

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

To find out about the Rights Respecting Schools award, which centres around the UNCRC, go to

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/the-rrsa/what-is-a-rights-respecting-school/>

To read about research on what primary age children think about school and how their voices are

heard, go to [https://cris.brighton.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/338077/FINAL-VERSION-Carol-](https://cris.brighton.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/338077/FINAL-VERSION-Carol-Robinson-Children-their-Voices-and-their-Experiences-of-School.pdf)

[Robinson-Children-their-Voices-and-their-Experiences-of-School.pdf](https://cris.brighton.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/338077/FINAL-VERSION-Carol-Robinson-Children-their-Voices-and-their-Experiences-of-School.pdf)

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