UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Leadership for Learning
THE CAMBRIDGE NETWORK

The *Influence and Participation of Children and Young People in their Learning* (IPiL) project

Research commissioned by:
The General Teaching Council for England

Directed by:
John MacBeath, David Frost and Dave Pedder
University of Cambridge Faculty of Education

Project coordinator:
Ros Frost
HCD Student Partnership
LfL at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education

GTC
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Contents

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The project rested on the participation of teachers and pupils from the following schools:

London:	Colegrave Primary School, Carpenters Primary School, Sarah Bonnell School, Lister Community School
Hertfordshire:	Ponsbourne St Marys School, Francis Bacon School, The Nobel School, Watling View School, The Wroxham School
Essex:	The Helena Romanes School, The Deanes School, Heybridge Integrated Support Centre PRU
Birmingham:	Birchfield Community School, Foundry Primary School, Turves Green Girls' School, St John Wall Catholic School
Knowsley:	Evelyn Community Primary School, Prescot Primary School, Prescot School, St Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic High School
Gateshead:	Lord Lawson of Beamish Community School, St Hild's College CE Aided Primary School, Joseph Swan School

We are grateful for the assistance of key teachers, supporting adults and participating pupils.

The project team
The project was directed by John MacBeath, David Frost and Dave Pedder and coordinated by Ros Frost.

Regional team leaders
The Cambridge team worked with a wider team of Regional Team Leaders who are experienced both as practitioners and as researchers.

Val Hill, Assistant Headteacher, Birchwood High School, Bishops Stortford

Tracy Gaiteri, Headteacher, Ponsbourne St Marys Primary School, Hatfield

Julie Roberts, Secondary Teaching and Learning Consultant, Gateshead Local Authority

Jenny Symonds, Researcher, PhD student and former English teacher

Sue Farrimond, Associate Scheme Programme Leader at Edge Hill University and formerly Assistant Headteacher at Prescot School, Knowsley

Jackie Ranger, Independent Consultant and formerly an Assistant Head Teacher in a secondary school.

Introduction

The project was commissioned by the General Teaching Council for England (GTC) in November 2007 and the research was completed in July 2008. The GTC is the independent professional body for the teaching profession in England and all qualified teachers currently teaching in maintained schools and non-maintained special schools within England must be registered with the Council. It works in the public interest to maintain and improve standards of professional conduct amongst teachers; and to contribute to improving the standards of teaching and the quality of learning. As part of the GTC's commitment to generating a stronger evidence base for all areas of its work, it commissioned a study of the ways in which schools enable pupils to influence the learning process and the conditions of their learning and to maximise their participation in learning.

The project team included academic staff from the Leadership for Learning (LfL) group at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education and a team of experienced practitioner researchers drawn from the teaching profession. The project built on extensive experience and expertise at Cambridge in the field of pupil voice, participation and consultation. Key researchers in previous work have included the late Jean Rudduck and Donald McIntyre as well as current faculty staff such as Dave Pedder, Julia Flutter, John MacBeath and Madeleine Arnot.

The research focused on the practices in schools that enable children and young people to participate in and influence the conditions of their own learning particularly in relation to assessment, behaviour for learning and the curriculum. It examined practice in 26 schools in six regions in England over a period of six months.

The project uncovered innovative and relevant practices but also captured the values and aspirations held by young people, teachers and senior leaders. The opening lines of the 1990 Report of Congress *Education Counts* have been much rehearsed, perhaps because they speak so loudly to what is powerfully true but observed primarily in the breach.

> We must learn to measure what we value rather than what we can easily measure.
>
> (National Center for Education Statistics, 1991)

This project sought, not to measure, but to illuminate by asking pupils and teachers to talk about their experiences, concerns and aspirations. When pupils who participated in the project were asked to talk about what is important to them they identified clear values which included:

- To be heard (to be listened to)
- To make a difference

- To enjoy ourselves
- To work together
- To participate more
- To get a better understanding about learning

Taken together these tell a powerful story and provide a set of indicators. They do not give precedence to the headline indicators of exam results but they lay the groundwork for such an ambition to be realised and go well beyond that specific, and ultimately limited, measure of success. The feelings of not counting, not being heard, not feeling valued, or learning that you can't make a difference lie at the root of much underachievement. Half a century on from *Half Our Future* (Newsom Report, 1963) the evidence is substantive and compelling that achievement is less a matter of ability than self-belief and opportunity.

These aspirations are not far removed from the five 'outcomes' of 'Every Child Matters' (DfES, 2004) which are also seen as the foundation of achievement and learning beyond schooling. Enjoying and achieving are inextricably linked with staying healthy and keeping safe in a psychological and emotional sense as well as physical, while social and economic well-being and contributing to the community are what pupils refer to when they emphasise working together and participating.

Teachers also expressed aspirations that clearly resonate with the goals of Assessment for Learning and Learning How to Learn (James *et al.*, 2007), including:

- Developing a clearer understanding of children's perspectives on their own learning
- Paying attention to pupil voice in the organisation of the curriculum
- Pupils experiencing more ownership, agency and sense of empowerment

It was abundantly clear from the outset of this research that there are many children and young people who are keen to make a positive contribution to the improvement of their own capacity for learning and to the improvement of the conditions for learning in their schools.

The Influence and Participation of Children and Young People in their Learning (IPiL) project

Executive Summary

Introduction

This research project was commissioned by the General Teaching Council for England (GTC) in November 2007 in order to fulfil its commitment to generating a stronger evidence base of the ways in which schools enable pupils to influence the learning process and the conditions of their learning and to maximise their participation in learning.

The project was carried out by the Leadership for Learning (LfL) team at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education building on extensive experience and expertise at Cambridge in the field of student voice, participation and consultation. The project team collaborated with a team of experienced practitioners drawn from the teaching profession to examine practice in 26 schools in six regions in England over a period of six months.

The project sought to discover ways in which schools enable pupils to participate in the learning process and to influence the conditions of their own learning. The themes of assessment, behaviour for learning and the curriculum provided a focus for inquiry. Practice was examined through discussion with pupils and teachers in regional groups, a survey of pupil views, pupil-led investigations in 22 schools, case studies of practice in seven schools and intensive discussion with a team of experienced practitioners.

Drawing on evidence generated through the activities listed above, the outcomes of the project include discussion of issues and salient messages for practitioners, principles for practice, issues for consideration by policy makers and tools to support further discourse and review.

The project uncovered innovative and relevant practices but also captured the values and aspirations held by young people, teachers and senior leaders. Teachers also expressed aspirations to develop a clearer understanding of children's perspectives on their own learning and to enable them to experience more ownership and empowerment.

It is evident in the IPiL project that children and young people want to contribute and they want to make a difference, not only to their own lives but to those around them as well as to the situations in which they find themselves.

Salient messages for practitioners

The full report includes a discussion of emerging themes each of which contains a 'salient message'. The themes are summarised here in three sub-sections: 'Participative learning cultures', 'Probing the depth of participation and influence' and 'Change and innovation'.

Participative learning cultures

The messages in this section are concerned with the importance of building pedagogic cultures in which pupils are seen as full partners in the learning enterprise. Dialogue is an essential ingredient of such cultures, which raises a question as to how and in what circumstances we can best promote and facilitate dialogue. For some, inviting pupils to engage in research has been a useful vehicle and for others the curriculum holds the key, presenting opportunities to draw pupils into decision-making on the content and focus of their learning. For some, a key way forward is to focus on 'learning how to learn' as a way of enabling pupils to talk about learning and to influence the learning process. The transition from primary to secondary school throws into sharp focus the difference in levels of participation with some pupils experiencing a loss of ownership and scope for influence as they cross that boundary. Overall, it became clear in this project that participative cultures do not just depend on particular pedagogical approaches or consultation strategies but gain their vitality through informal interaction in an atmosphere of trust.

Salient messages:

- Pupil influence is most likely to flourish when there is a dialogic climate rather than when contained in a series of one-off events.

- If pupils are to be more influential and able to participate fully in the learning enterprise we need to create contexts that help pupils and teachers to reflect on how that may be realised.

- Enabling pupils to carry out research is a powerful way of supporting their agency particularly where it focuses on learning and the contexts for learning.

- The curriculum itself provides rich opportunities to maximise pupil participation by involving pupils in curriculum planning, incorporating 'learning to learn' as a dimension of curriculum and

by drawing on subject domains to focus on the nature of what it is to be human.

- The process of transition from the primary to the secondary school needs to be informed by insights into ways in which pupils have already learnt how to exercise influence and how to play an active role in their learning and that of their peers.

- A participative climate is nourished in part by the development of informal opportunities for conversation conveying to pupils that they are valued partners in the learning enterprise.

Probing the depth of participation and influence

It was evident in the IPiL project that pupil influence and participation have become embedded in the fabric of some of the schools, while in others remaining more on the surface. It is less challenging to enable pupils to have a voice on some of the organisational or social aspects of school life rather than addressing issues which lie at the core business of the school – learning. This is about building pedagogic cultures in which pupils' voice and agency are enhanced at every opportunity. As teachers and senior leaders acknowledge, there remains in many schools an 'unconsulted majority', and that it cannot simply be assumed that pupils will respond positively to the invitation to participate or to openly express their views. Pupils do not necessarily see the value in sharing the responsibility for learning nor necessarily trust that their voice will be heard. What is needed therefore is positive intervention by schools. In the end pupils will learn, through their experience of a genuinely responsive environment, that it is possible to be influential and that this is of inestimable value to them as learners.

Salient messages:

- Pupils need to be enabled to participate in shaping the experience of learning rather than being limited to having a voice in relation to matters such as behaviour and domestic arrangements in the school.

- Pupil voice and the development of their human agency need to be addressed coherently rather than through fragmented and piecemeal strategies.

- While celebrating the success of particular strategies for pupil consultation and participation there still remains considerable scope for all pupils in the school to participate and to be heard.

- Pupils need to be taught how to fully participate in the learning enterprise, entailing a more developed understanding of the concept of learning and the conditions that favour it.

- For pupil participation to grow we need to ensure that voice leads to tangible change or a visible 'follow-through'.

Innovation and change

The development of more participative cultures in schools may be a worthwhile goal but it is a challenging one. Change is always challenging but in relation to pupil influence and participation the stakes are high. This goal raises questions about the balance of power and authority between teachers and their pupils and about the nature of teacher-pupil relationships. It is therefore unrealistic to expect either that the journey of change will be quick or that it will proceed in a linear fashion. It is encouraging nevertheless, to find a high degree of moral purpose in our schools. It is a resource to be drawn upon and nurtured. Some teachers will feel threatened while others will need to be convinced of the importance of pupil participation and influence in learning. It demands determined and skilful leadership to build professional cultures within which members of staff feel able to review and develop their practice. Such innovation and change requires courage on everyone's part.

Salient messages:

- The development of a culture of participation takes time and has to be addressed as a long-term, capacity-building process.

- School staff need support from external sources to help them cope with the discomfort of dissidence and challenge that is an inevitable manifestation of voice and shared leadership.

- There is a need to constantly highlight the moral purpose that lies at the centre of pupil participation and influence.

- Senior and middle leaders need to focus on the culture building and professional development that supports the growth of a more participative approach to the relationship between teachers and pupils.

- Teachers need support in reframing their professional identity so that their authority is not threatened by sharing responsibility for learning and teaching.

- The development of a coherent, participative culture demands skilled and determined leadership, distributed widely within the school

- Breaking the mould of repressive practices requires courage.

Principles for practice

The IPiL project illuminated a wide range of strategies to enable pupils both to influence and participate actively in their learning. These included consultative strategies such as the use of surveys, School Councils and other consultative forums. Common strategies for involving pupils include inviting them to help frame rules for behaviour and involving them in the process of staff selection. In some schools, pupils are asked to take on special roles of responsibility such as peer mediators and in others they are invited to engage in research or to act as observers to aid teachers' self-evaluation. In some schools pupils exercise choice about how to learn and what to learn, in some cases taking on quasi-teaching roles.

There are many such strategies but the development of a more participative culture is not merely a matter of implementing a set of strategies. The evidence from the IPiL project is that changes in pedagogic and professional cultures take time and involve dialogue. All concerned need opportunities to engage in discussion, reflection and review. The principles set out below have been drawn from the evidence generated in this project as well as from previous research; they are offered here as a basis for dialogue within schools and other appropriate forums. Readers are invited to discuss, amend and develop them as they wish.

The principles:

Pupil participation in their own learning is enhanced when:

- School structures are designed to encourage and support participation

- Pupil participation and influence is embodied in the culture

- The relationship between teachers and pupils is seen as a partnership for learning

- The experience and expertise of pupils are drawn upon as resources for learning and school improvement

- Teaching is responsive to the needs and interests of pupils and creates space for a learning dialogue to occur

- Pupils are able to exercise choice and agency in all aspects of their learning

- Pupils have opportunities to participate in school-wide decision making

- Everyone, including pupils, is encouraged to exercise leadership as appropriate to task and context with opportunities for leadership to be a shared activity

- Everyone, including pupils, is encouraged to engage in systematic inquiry and reflection focusing on the nature of learning and the experience of schooling

- Pupils are key players in school self-evaluation, an ongoing process embedded at classroom, school and community levels

As the evidence shows these principles are not unproblematic and do not come easily to teachers in a climate where there are practical constraints related to curriculum coverage and testing requirements. Nevertheless, they are offered as a tool for future review and debate.

Issues for consideration by policy makers

The evidence gathered in the IPiL project supports the view that the development of practice in this area is particularly challenging. It is important therefore that policy and practice are constructed progressively through dialogue and the reframing of priorities informed by accounts of leading-edge practice.

In policy development, pupils' influence and their participation as full partners in learning need to be recognised as essential to the pursuit of enhanced achievement. This implies a need to build on the helpful guidance from the DCSF[1] by focusing on ways in which participation and influence can be integrated into learning, teaching and assessment.

There is evidence through the IPiL project that pupils experience fewer opportunities to influence and participate in the learning process when they make the transition to their secondary schools. While there is valuable evidence of consultative strategies in secondary schools and of committed efforts to ease the transition from primary to secondary school, there

[1] Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008) *Working together: Listening to the voices of children and young people.*

remains nonetheless scope for the development of policy. Further work needs to be done to facilitate more effective collaboration between schools, ensuring that targets, grades and levels are not pursued to the detriment of reflective conversation on the experience of learning.

It is important that, as newly qualified teachers are inducted into the culture of a school they are able to recognise opportunities to engage pupils as partners in the learning enterprise. This is a consideration for initial teacher education programmes as well as continuing professional development and day-to-day school life.

The evidence suggests that some teachers feel disenfranchised or threatened by attempts to build a more participative climate. This has to be viewed in the larger policy context of de-professionalisation. Pupils' agency and participation will not be realised without teachers' seeing themselves as architects of school and classroom policy and practice.

School leaders need to consider the building of a culture of inquiry in which teachers and pupils alike are supported in gathering evidence, debating its meaning and feeding into self evaluation and improvement planning. Within the 'New Relationship with Schools', pupils' role as learners, researchers and knowledge creators should be seen as integral to improvement planning.

Conclusion

The primary aim of the IPiL project was to uncover practices that enable pupils to participate in the learning process and to be influential in shaping the conditions and direction of their learning. Pupils, teachers and researchers participated in a variety of discussion activities that generated rich data within safe and stimulating contexts. Through this process the project was able to identify principles which 'travel' successfully into day-to-day classroom and school practice.

The outcomes of the project are expressed in terms of the issues and salient messages for practitioners, portraits of practice, the principles that might influence future development, tools to support development and the lessons for policy makers.

It seems clear that the goal for the education system has to be to create more participative cultures in which dialogic relationships, partnerships for learning and consultative practices are integrated into the day-to-day practice of the school. Pedagogy is at the heart of teachers' professionalism. Its aim is to discover how to enhance the potential of children and young people as learners. The IPiL project has highlighted the powerful role that pupil influence can play in that enterprise when there are consultative processes which create a sense of ownership and belonging. More powerful

still are opportunities which allow pupils to make real choices and to exert a direct influence on the nature and direction of their learning.

This study suggests that primary schools seem to have greater potential to create participative climates and that pupils' experience of the learning environment may change quite markedly when they transfer to the secondary school. The growing tendency towards collaboration between schools may well present opportunities to address this problem so that secondary school staff and the system as a whole are able to build on the gains that many pupils have made in their primary schools.

The IPiL project highlights the need to allow human agency to flourish within learning communities. The journey that children make from dependent infants to mature members of a democratic and civil society will be given momentum by their experience of participative processes throughout their school days. Active citizenship is nurtured through tangible expressions of respect for children's identity as human beings. We cannot afford to allow the more easily measurable indicators of the school's quality and effectiveness to divert attention from that larger goal of just and civil citizenship.

The development of participative practice requires courage and sensitivity. It is not simply a matter of releasing the bounds in the hope that pupils' right to be influential will automatically flourish nor is it simply a matter of deploying a particular set of tools and techniques. It requires a developmental mindset in which senior leaders enable their colleagues to engage in systematic review of practice.

There are no quick fixes. It takes time to build confidence and trust. It takes time to move beyond the comfort zone and to recognise that there may be more effective ways of doing things. It requires support and a strong sense of internal accountability to challenge established practice and to take risks. The principles for practice set out above are offered not as a set of criteria to judge performance but hopefully as a starting point for critical reflection and generative debate.

Section 1
A participative mode of inquiry

An outline of the methodology of the project

This section of the report consists of an overview of the research methodology and provides a rationale for the approach.

A qualitative study

The project was conceived as an essentially qualitative study which aimed to gather evidence of innovative practices and of the pupils' experience of strategies which enable them to influence the learning process. The research team sought to understand these in their institutional contexts and in relation to the quality of relationships between teachers and pupils. Pupils' and their teachers' views were elicited in order to generate insights into the dynamic relationships between phenomena, to make visible points of tension and to identify issues which both practitioners and policy makers need to consider to develop practice in this area.

The need for focus, empowerment and flexibility within the project was addressed by combining a range of open-ended and participatory methods with some more closed, quantitative methods. These included:

- collaborative planning with regional team leaders
- combined pupil and staff workshops designed to consult pupils and teachers about participative practices in their schools
- workshops to prepare for pupil-led school-based investigations
- pupil-led, school-based investigations in 22 schools
- case study school visits (7) to observe practice, interview pupils and staff
- a survey of pupils in all project schools.

A participative approach

The methodology of the project reflected the principles that underpin a professional commitment to participation and influence. The process was designed to be an accessible and inclusive one, involving pupils and teachers as active participants rather than merely as objects of the research. The challenge was to provide sufficient space and structure for a meaningful participative process while at the same time ensuring that the project would have substantive outcomes useful to both practitioners and policy makers. Of necessity this approach contained a developmental dimension in which the team was able to intervene to provide support – to act as a catalyst for change in the participating schools.

The project worked with children, young people, teachers and other adults from schools in six areas of England. The 26 schools which accepted the invitation to participate in the project were situated in a range of urban and rural environments reflecting areas of social and economic deprivation as well as affluence. This included ten primary schools, twelve secondary schools, two special schools and two pupil referral units (PRUs) for pupils who had been excluded from mainstream schooling. These schools, of varying sizes, worked together in regional groups of between three and five schools, each facilitated by a Regional Team Leader (RTL). These team leaders were highly competent teachers as well as experienced practitioner researchers with some experience of working with children and young people helping them to develop research skills and to see themselves as researchers. The 62 pupil participants came from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and presented a broad spectrum of educational achievement and need. The teachers and other adults, 33 in total, were, in the main, class teachers, senior leaders or teaching assistants.

The project's RTL's were all highly skilled in facilitation and were provided with materials to support the workshops. These included, for example, sets of photographs of classroom situations together with questions and prompts to stimulate a response. Sometimes the workshop was built around a simple schedule of questions for reflection with spaces to record comments. Post-it labels and flip-chart paper were used generously to record comments and gather feedback.

These workshops enabled the team to learn about the benefits of such experiences for pupils and teachers. Asked to write about their hopes, a predominant theme from children and young people was for the workshop experience to be sustained back at school. They spoke and wrote about wanting to be able to speak out, to say what they really felt, to share their feelings and to be listened to when the pressure was on and when it really mattered.

> *I want to go back to school feeling confident.*

In one region secondary students were present at the first conference without their teachers. While all the contributions at each conference were very positive, the comments from this small group of pupils are quite instructive about the environment in which they learn. Their expectations for the IPiL project included:

> *Better student – teacher relationships to improve learning*
> *Turn up in arranged meeting times and discuss the options/opinions there*
> *Show that we are committed and not wasting time*
> *Take other views in and think about them*

Express your views and others will listen. Let them express their views and put them all together for an outcome
Show respect. If people find things hard then try to help them

(Secondary pupils)

For two secondary students attending a special school the requirements were quite different. It was important for others to know their communication needs.

Have fun – smile at each other
Working on your own and together
Share (ideas) things
Look at each other

(Secondary pupils)

Overall the contributions to the workshops were characterised by generous and positive thinking and acknowledgment of some apprehension as this comment by a primary pupil shows.

If someone gets something wrong you say well done or good try.

(Primary pupil)

The workshops in which children and adults worked together provided the space away from the pressures of the classroom to think and learn together. This collegial exploration, shorn of the defences and protocols of the classroom and of the timetable-driven school day, allowed a quality of dialogue difficult to realise within the conventional 'lesson' structure. Teachers talked about '*opportunity to explore ideas'*, which they ascribed to the lack of formality, concerns about status and anxiety about *'letting go'*.

Pupils talked about the simple things such as having name badges, meals in adult company and the importance of a congenial setting as opposed to one 'saturated with immaturity' (Lawrence Lightfoot, 2004). '*The environment was relaxed and made us feel comfortable*', was an opinion expressed by pupils in many different ways.

The workshops enabled pupils and staff to explore the concept and language of participation and relate this to their own experience of the project.

Didn't feel like tokenism

I think it was good to have all the activities and I enjoyed them and they helped a lot.

The changing things for our school went very well because the teachers said that it will definitely happen!

(Primary pupils)

Pupil-led, school-based investigations

Workshops aimed at supporting pupil-led, school-based investigations were an important element in the first round of conference events . The intention was for these to create an additional layer of data generated by pupils themselves. Following the initial round of consultation, pupils, with the support of their teachers, planned and carried out focused inquiries in their schools to illuminate and evaluate ways in which their schools supported pupil participation and enabled them to influence the conditions of their learning. All pupils in the project engaged in this process although, in the case of those with learning difficulties and disabilities, activities were adapted which enabled them to engage in ways meaningful for them. Pupils spoke of enjoying their research engagement in school, and in spite of the challenging timescale they were ambitious, in some cases surveying over 130 and interviewing nearly 40 of their peers.

In total 22 schools supported pupil research teams of between two and seven pupils. These teams used a range of methods to collect data including interviews, observations, questionnaires, photographs and video. It was very common for pupil teams to use more than one method. Pupils' thinking, ethical awareness and organisation were of a very high quality. Investigating research topics such as 'Teacher feedback', 'Homework', 'Rewards' and 'The School Council' provided their schools with invaluable insights and in some cases were the catalyst for change in school policy and practice. In the majority of cases the quality of the pupils' research exceeded their teachers' expectations.

Case study visits to schools

The project team carried out visits to seven of the participating schools including three primary schools, two secondary schools, one special school and one pupil referral unit. Detailed evidence was also contributed by three more schools and included a documentary video made by pupils at a secondary school, a set of reports written by pupil researchers at another secondary school and a documentary video produced by Year 6 pupils in one of the primary schools (see Appendix 1 for details of the schools visited).

The case study visits involved interviews with the headteacher, a number of teachers and groups of pupils. In most cases key activities were observed and discussed with the teachers and pupils involved. The style of the interviews was conversational and exploratory. The process was not identical in each of the schools visited but was responsive to circumstances and, to some extent, opportunistic.

These case studies generated rich and nuanced data about strategies for enabling influence and participation and they also captured accounts of the schools' development agendas with regard to pupil voice, consultation and participation. To read case studies from four participating schools, see Appendix 1.

The pupil survey

During the period that pupils were carrying out their investigations, the research team gathered quantitative data through a questionnaire administered to about 650 Year 5 and Year 8 pupils in the participating schools. The questionnaire was designed to gather data in relation to pupils' influence and participation in decisions about learning and teaching, assessment and behaviour. The items in the questionnaire were developed in order to understand more about:

- the extent to which pupils perceive that they influence teaching and learning, behaviour and assessment

- the scope that teachers provide in classroom lessons for pupils to influence learning

- the way pupils feel about talking to their teachers about their learning

The instrument is designed to elicit two responses to each question. A single statement such as *Teachers ask me about where I like to learn in lessons* is accompanied by two columns of tick boxes, allowing the pupil to comment a) on the extent to which that practice actually occurs in school, and b) on the extent to which they value that practice. The similarities or differences in response provide a 'gap index', that is the distance between what is seen as desirable and what is seen as actually happening in schools and classrooms.

The database (650 pupils) was large enough to be able to subject the data to factor analysis. This process generated three salient factors which we termed:

- Pupils Influence Teaching, Behaviour and Assessment
- Pupils Influence Learning in Lessons
- Pupils Talk to their Teachers about their Learning

As a way of comparing actual practice and desired practice, a mean score was calculated for each of the three factors. The usefulness of a mean score is that it portrays as simply as possible two key ideas: a) the relative importance of each of the three factors, b) the size of the gap between current practice and values placed on practice. The mean scores included in

the tables represent values between 0 and 100. Tables also include a standard deviation (SD) score which shows the extent to which there is a spread of opinion around the mean. The higher the SD, the wider the spread of scores for a given factor. These standard deviation scores reflect considerable divergence of views recorded by different pupils.

A discursive methodology

The survey notwithstanding, the project methodology was essentially a discursive one comprising an extended conversation scaffolded by workshop activities that allowed voices to be heard and issues to be debated. Regional team leaders came together with the research team at intervals to share experience and evaluate the evidence generated through the workshops and school visits.

Section 2
Issues for practice in schools and classrooms

Themes arising from data analysis

In this section we identify 18 key issues that arose from an analysis of the data; from the questionnaires, workshop activities, case studies, teacher and researcher reports, pupils' presentations of their own research projects; and from the challenges met by teachers in implementing reform in their own schools.

The key themes are grouped in three sub-sections:

Participative learning cultures
Probing the depth of participation and influence
Change and innovation

Attached to each theme is a 'salient message' for practitioners.

A. Participative learning cultures

This section discusses themes that focus on learning and the conditions that enable pupils to participate in the learning process and influence its nature and direction.

Dialogue: the way we do things round here

The word 'dialogue' has been used by teachers to refer to a process which is, by definition, about voice but refers to something more than speaking and listening. It is about a shared search for meaning and mutual understanding. It is not a one-off event but continuous. It is not reserved for special places or special occasions but an essential aspect of the school's ethos. It has been captured in Robin Alexander's notion of the dialogic classroom and the dialogic school (Alexander, 2008), Senge's 'learning school' (Senge *et al*., 2000) and McGilchrist *et al.'s* 'intelligent school' (2004). It is readily acknowledged by teachers and senior leaders, however, that this is an ideal state which is not simply or easily achieved. The journey towards it is by starting small, by modelling and by living example and, over time, making the implicit explicit and a matter of planned intervention.

These messages from schools in this project find a close parallel in an international project in which schools in seven countries identified as a key principle for practice 'dialogue', engendered by the sharing of values, understandings and practices (MacBeath, Frost, Swaffield and Waterhouse, 2006). However, there remains a key question about the content of that

dialogue. For some, dialogue might mean a discussion with pupils about the level of their attainment but others would see this as a shallow interpretation of the term, preferring to widen the frame so that it includes the what, how, who, when and, perhaps most saliently, the why of learning.

Salient message: Pupil influence will be seen to flourish when there is a dialogic climate rather than when contained in a series of one-off events.

Conducive contexts for consultation

One of the key dimensions of the project methodology was the staging of conferences for teachers and pupils in the six regions in the project. These were held in a variety of venues chosen to provide an experience removed from the day-to-day reality of school.

What was it, as some pupils and teachers asked, that was 'different from classroom-based activities'? In answer, a common response from both parties was to identify aspects of the environment and the structure of activities that enabled teachers and pupils to share openly, without defence. As some pupils put it, *'being able to speak out without being afraid'*. This was not a place for right and wrong answers but where you could voice a thought which, however 'silly', would be considered. After the first conference one teacher wrote about *'some fantastic ideas which maybe we wouldn't have thought about if not for these activities'*.

The question this raises is of transfer of learning, and was expressed in the hopes that children articulated. Does learning and the self-assurance that goes with powerful experiences of achievement transfer from one context to another? Do teachers incorporate new ways of behaving into their teaching and do pupils sustain their enthusiasm and apply newfound skills when they are back in the classroom? The research evidence in this respect is not highly encouraging. As Perkins and Gardner report from Project Zero in Harvard, there are three key elements of learning that are highly context-sensitive: a) the ability to spot the problem, or issue at hand, b) the motivation to want to solve the problem or address the issue, and c) the possession of a repertoire of tools and knowledge and knowing which tools/strategies are most appropriate to the task at hand[2]. In the classroom environment much of what takes place is so teacher-led and so tightly structured that the problem is presented, the need to solve it is implicit and the tools are prescribed, yet often inaccessible or not understood as generic and transferable.

For teachers and pupils it is vital that conference events such as these plan for transfer and that there is clear continuity back in the school and classroom. Attrition can set in quickly when, back in a school environment,

[2] Project Zero www.pz.harvard.edu accessed July 2008.

pupils may have to tread more carefully with certain members of staff and recognise where and when 'voice' needs to be modulated and where the boundaries of research may need to be drawn. The environment of a conference event may be difficult to replicate in a classroom but the ethos and the activities can travel more easily. Ethos, in the original Greek, refers to a set of permeating values, from which the word 'ethic' comes. It is the 'ethic' of mutual respect, the recognition of entitlement to be heard, both as a teacher and a pupil. The practice of displaying ground rules on the classroom wall composed and agreed by pupils is increasingly common in primary schools but as yet without the same foothold in secondary schools where the ethic of a different classroom requires insight, adaptability and skilful navigation by pupils themselves. Understanding the contextual nature of voice is important not only as it varies from one classroom to another, but also for knowing how to modulate that voice with different adults, prospective employers, peers and parents. It is an essential aspect of what is learned and how that learning is sensitively applied.

There are interesting contrasts between classroom conventions and those of conference events such as those deployed in the IPiL project, especially in relation to the styles and media of communication and the different kinds of challenges these present.

In the workshops children were asked to scribble ideas on large sheets of paper and to write quickly on post-it notes. Spelling and neatness were not at issue. Capitals and lower case were not a cause for concern. This could be difficult for pupils trained to draw margins, put the date at the top of the page, write neatly and give attention to detail. Brainstorming, in which every idea is accepted and written down without comment, censure or praise, is difficult to adjust to in the face of the longstanding convention of hands up, no shouting out right and wrong answers, and the traditional game of guessing at what answer the teacher is looking for.

One of the striking common strands in pupils' comments on their school experience and the workshop experience was the social factor. Pupils valued 'talking to new people', meeting children from other schools, talking with adults in an informal one-to-one relationship. Working together, sharing ideas, learning with and from one another were seen as more salient in the conference context than in school, not because classrooms do not typically involve group work but because working together was not instrumental to overtaking a curricular objective but rather the essence of the process itself. In a less competitive environment than school, the sensitivity and empathic qualities that are natural to most youngsters are allowed to emerge and to express themselves. Comments like these were common:

Allowed you to think about others and other people's learning

Good for being able to put yourself in other people's shoes

Changing learning and teaching routines can, and does, travel back from conference workshops to classrooms. They provide teachers with a wider repertoire of strategies, so that co-operative learning is not always driven by curricular objectives but is seen as allowing space for reflection on relationships and on the learning process itself. Spelling and neatness have their place but so do other forms of expressing ideas - convergent and divergent. Pupils too can carry learning and research strategies with them from workshop to school or from English to Mathematics but they need the support from teachers to be able to use those strategies and adapt them to the subject context in which they may be applied.

Salient message: For pupils and teachers, we may need to provide contexts that are conducive to reflecting on ways which enable pupils to be more influential and to participate more in the learning enterprise.

Pupils as researchers: doing what comes naturally

Workshops characterised by support for pupil-led, school-based investigations and designed to create an additional layer of data generated by pupils themselves were important element in the first round of conference events (see Appendix 2 for details on projects and findings).

Teachers and the research team were at times surprised at how easily and inventively pupils took to the research task. Often they needed no prompting on research ethics, logistics and practicalities and little external incentive to design and carry out their projects. This is not surprising since pupils come to school curious and with investigative instinct which, critics such as Sir Ken Robinson claim, is curtailed very early when the message of school is that inquiry has strict limits and is bounded not by the questions children ask but the questions framed by their teachers. It is, therefore, liberating for pupils to free their imaginations, to give them scope for inquiry into some of the unseen aspects of school life.

The range of investigations included the extent to which School Councils encourage pupil participation, and the extent to which consultation and decision-making extend to the curriculum itself. What was the latitude for choice? Why are some children more likely to be proactive and exercise voice in their learning? What does empowerment mean and how does it express itself in practice? What responsibility do pupils take for their misbehaviour and what choices do they have in regulating their own behaviour?

The scope and discretion on the part of pupils was in some cases mediated by teachers who channelled pupils into, and away from, certain topics or areas of inquiry. For example, the ban on eating while studying was

immediately ‘scotched’ by staff in one school. There might be good reasons for such a ban but it is through inquiry that these issues could be explored and articulated, and the rationale for the ban perhaps more easily accepted. Alternatively, the potential richness of the subject could extend very well into physiology, brain research, types of brain food, as well as the psychology and social nature of eating while studying at home, in offices (in the movies journalists and cops do it!) and in the staffroom.

In schools where pupils had already been involved in research it betrayed the adult hand in the shape of more mainstream research methods such as questionnaires and interviews. Pupils, faced with a question to be explored, could come up with non-traditional, or idiosyncratic, approaches to finding out, perhaps through drawing, photography, filming, experiment or role play. The balance between structure and direction on the one hand and open exploration on the other is a delicate one. It is one that teachers have to learn through activities which test the parameters of agency and leave room for genuine surprise.

Salient message: Enabling pupils to carry out research is a powerful way to support their agency particularly if it focuses on learning and the context for learning.

The curriculum culture

As the curriculum represents the centrepiece of what schools do, the culture of the classroom in which the curriculum is engaged offers immense scope for participative voice. This may occur in three distinctive but overlapping ways.

a. Making the process of engagement with knowledge a ‘curriculum’ in its own right. The language of curriculum ‘delivery’ suggests a body of knowledge which passes from teacher and text to pupils, not a process that many teachers would recognise as capturing the essence of what happens in classrooms. Participation implies that children and young people have something to contribute to the nature of ‘delivery’ and its meeting point with their interests and motivation to learn. The essence of the curriculum may therefore be seen as learning how to learn, with modes of access to knowledge as the precursor and lever of knowledge creation.

b. Using key themes within curricular content to explore issues such as voice, relationships, identity, authority and power. Curriculum content, in some subjects in particular (for example English, History, Science, Art, Sociology, Psychology), deals explicitly with the human condition, personal and social life, democratic participation, authority and power. There are opportunities here for discussion of how these issues play out in schools, classrooms and communities. A phrase that has fallen into disuse in recent years is ‘the hidden curriculum,’ but it remains as pertinent as ever, as

pupils pick up powerful messages when issues such as authority remain implicit, while equally powerful lessons can be learned when those issues are made explicit and discussable.

c. Curricular choice is a third area which offers scope for participation and the exercise of agency, informed by discussions of choice itself, the activity and the consequences of choosing. Key decisions are taken in a context of differing options, the latitude for choice that is offered within schools and choice as a continuing and sometimes contentious life skill.

Salient message: The curriculum itself provides rich opportunities to maximise pupil participation by involving pupils in curriculum planning, seeing 'learning to learn' as a dimension of curriculum and by drawing on subject domains to focus on the nature of what it is to be human.

The difference between primary and secondary

It is clear from the pupil survey that, in relation to the three key factors identified in the factor analysis, there is a manifest gap between what happens and what 'ought' to happen in the pupils' eyes, although the mean scores in relation to the third factor *Pupils talk to their Teachers about their Learning,* is more encouraging and shows a relatively small gap (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Overall patterns of pupil influence and participation

	Practices		Values	
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Pupils influence teaching, behaviour and assessment *	25.5	22.0	52.6	25.8
Pupils influence learning in lessons *	21.4	20.9	48.6	25.7
Pupils talk to their teachers about their learning *	41.1	23.0	51.6	24.6

Table 1: Mean Scores for 'Pupil Influence' and 'Pupils Talking to their Teachers'

*Significant mean-values-practice gap (p = < .05)

The most striking differences, however, come to light when we compare pupils in primary and secondary schools. On all three factors, with reference to current practice, Year 5 pupils were much more positive than their Year 8 counterparts in respect of influence on lessons, behaviour, teaching and assessment and in talking to teachers about their learning. They were also more ambitious in their desire to influence teaching and to talk to teachers about their learning. The most striking, and perhaps worrying, statistic is the very significant gap for Year 8 pupils in relation to

the item *Pupils Influence Learning in Lessons*. Table 2 indicates a mean score of 18.3 for current practice compared with 50.6 for the value placed on that practice.

Table 2. Comparing Year 5 pupils and Year 8 pupils

		Practices		Values	
		Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Pupils influence teaching, behaviour and assessment **	Year 5 *	44.3	20.9	61.3	21.0
	Year 8 *	20.4	19.4	50.2	26.4
Pupils influence learning in lessons**	Year 5 *	32.9	23.1	42.0	21.1
	Year 8 *	18.3	19.1	50.6	26.6
Pupils talk to their teachers about their learning **	Year 5 *	46.5	22.5	61.9	21.7
	Year 8 *	39.7	22.9	48.7	24.6

* Significant mean-values-practice gap (p = < .05)
** Significant differences between Yr 5 and Yr 8 mean-practice and values scores (p = < .05)

The schools came to the project with different histories and cultural backgrounds, different constellations of staffing and with pupils from widely disparate social backgrounds, levels of ability and engagement with school. The distinctions between primary and secondary were often sharp, less because of the children than the distinctive structures, and strictures, to which teachers and pupils had to accommodate. As one of the research team observed:

> *The most striking thing arising from our conference was the great variance amongst schools, in particular, primary and secondary. Primary school children were able to think of many opportunities for pupil participation, whereas the secondary school were unsure and concerned about tokenistic opportunities.*

The case study data also suggested that primary school pupils were more likely to see themselves as influential and participatory than their secondary school counterparts. While in secondary schools there is certainly evidence of creative initiatives and breakthrough strategies (see Section 3 for details), in general the pedagogic and organisational cultures are such that pupils appear to take a backward step in terms of influence and participation.

Salient message: The process of transition from the primary to the secondary school needs to be informed by insights into ways in which

pupils have already learnt how to be influential and to be more participative in the learning endeavour.

The informal culture

There is a longstanding tradition within schools of talking and listening within the interstices of school life – at lunchtimes, in the playground, after school, in extra-curricular activities, in residential experiences where conversations arise spontaneously and without a sense of differential status and distance. These aspects of the informal culture prove, in many instances, to provide the ethos for a deeper sharing to take place.

Researchers have coined the term 'one-legged conferencing' to refer to those moments in corridors, gymnasia or playgrounds where, with one foot resting on a bench or against the wall, there is an ad hoc, opportunistic conversation about something that really matters. These episodes have been described as 'magic moments', brief but often powerful in shaping relationships and building trust.

In one primary school the head teacher spoke about the relative invisibility of formal consultation strategies which may seem to be the most obvious way to proceed but, in her view, were not the most important. Through collaborative and friendly relationships, happiness went hand in hand with achievement.

> *There is a striking emphasis on 'being happy' which the headteacher sees as a key outcome for pupils and for staff – this was mentioned in each discussion throughout the day. Rigour, nevertheless remains central to the school's evaluation of its work, from assessment to school dinners. An element of evaluation activity is whether actions help to increase the participants' happiness in school. As a result the school community is a happy one as well as a high achieving one.*
>
> (Ofsted Report, 2007)

For this school, the key concept is not pupil consultation or voice – it is 'a partnership for learning' and the most important ingredient in that is 'choice'. Clearly this is a challenge for those who have become convinced that our national education system has extinguished choice in the curriculum and even in models of teaching, but we have strong evidence that some schools have been able to respond positively to the invitation from the QCA to 'customize the curriculum' (QCA, 2005) and to become curriculum authors rather than mere scribes.

In situations where the majority of pupils are disaffected and have failed to keep a foothold in the mainstream school system, informal interaction may be the only kind that works.

Salient message: A participative climate is nourished in part by the development of informal opportunities for conversation that convey to pupils that they are part of a partnership for learning.

B. Probing the depth of participation and influence

This section discusses the extent to which participative practices are embedded in schools and indicates some of the directions that practice may need to develop.

Spheres of influence

Teachers generally tend to be more comfortable with encouraging voice in some domains than in others. There is a common pattern for teachers to value pupil agency more in relation to behaviour than in relation to teaching or assessment. This may be explained as teachers' 'hierarchy of needs'. In other words, behaviour is the bottom line, the basis on which everything else rests. It is, in many cases, also attended by a view that while behaviour falls legitimately within pupils' domain of influence, teaching and assessment are professional matters for teachers alone.

The evidence is that 'voice' can extend and grow incrementally from a focus on issues such as behaviour and class rules, to the extent that pupils gain confidence from being listened to and feel that they are taken seriously. Teachers' greater confidence and willingness to take risks comes through the recognition that they too are the beneficiaries of consultation, leading them to extend the space for pupils to enter new areas of inquiry and influence.

For some of the schools in the IPiL project the emphasis tended to be on the pupils' role in the learning process. This is really a matter of the quality of relationships and a general disposition towards partnership in the learning enterprise, but there are specific elements of the process where pupil influence is most obvious. These are, for example, in target setting, peer/self-assessment, choosing a learning buddy and pupil-led parent consultation events. Where this partnership approach to learning is embedded in the fabric of the school the idea of formal consultation seems contrived and unnecessarily formal.

Salient message: Pupils need to be enabled to participate in shaping the experience of learning rather than being limited to having a voice in relation to matters such as behaviour and domestic arrangements in the school.

From structured opportunities to coherence and synergy

In no school in this project are 'voice' and 'agency' entirely absent or undervalued. They have their place within a number of differing structured opportunities – in school councils, in sporting activities, in extra-curricular activities, in prefect and monitoring systems, in mentoring and buddying, and in pupils-as-researchers projects. There are also individual classrooms where there is scope and latitude for open expression and honest feedback although this tends to vary widely from teacher to teacher and subject to subject. Pupils get to know fairly quickly where the boundaries are drawn and what latitude exists for negotiation.

At the level of school policy, pupils are most likely to be consulted on toilets, uniform, food, and increasingly on the appointment of new staff. However, some school staff expressed concern at the nature of disparate initiatives and the fractured, piecemeal nature of consultation. A systematic approach to consulting pupils about the curriculum was in place in at least one of the project schools but this appears to be some way from an established norm in most schools. However, as schools develop a greater awareness of the more deeply lying issues of voice and agency, there comes on its coattails an enhanced understanding of the need for coherence and synergy between what might be called the 'activity system' of the pupil body and the 'activity system' of the school.

Salient message: Pupil voice and the development of their human agency need to be addressed coherently rather than through fragmented and piecemeal strategies.

The 'unconsulted majority'

Discussion during the conference days raised questions as to whose voice is heard? Whose voice finds authentic expression? Who listens? These were challenging questions for schools, raising questions as to how far pupil voice initiatives were genuinely inclusive of all groups. There was explicit recognition by senior leaders at one case study secondary school that many pupils were excluded from processes of participation and influence – a group referred to in the case study report as the *'unconsulted majority'*. Whether or not in any given school those excluded from opportunities to influence decision-making, policy and practice represent a majority or a minority of pupils, it is clear that consultation may be partial and potentially divisive.

A key challenge facing schools such as the one mentioned above, relates to how connections can be made between the small number of pupils who are actively involved in school council and pupils-as-researchers activities and

the ‘unknown perspectives’ of the wider pupil body. Some kind of shift in organisational vision and perspective seems to be necessary if the *‘unknown perspectives’* that belong to that majority *‘excluded from the organising systems of the school’* are to be taken seriously. There was some concern expressed by teachers that consultation ‘above the waterline’ concealed what lay beneath. There was also some residual anxiety as to what the excluded majority might begin to say if they were genuinely consulted, listened to and responded to.

These issues become particularly pertinent in schools in challenging circumstances, or schools in which there are disturbed and alienated young people who have lost trust in the system and in adults. In relation to these young people staff spoke of their lack of confidence, ‘*a fear of learning, fear of authority, fear of society’*. As one Pupil Referral Unit Manager put it: ‘*Most of the young people who come here are driven by fear*.’ This fear could prevent them from participating, increase self-consciousness and fuel worries about exposure and confrontation within their peer group. Some young people continue to nurse deep-seated anger against the system and the adults who represent it. These negative feelings were manifest in pupils’ rejection of workshop activities designed to give them a voice, perceiving them as ‘work’.

These are young people who need to rebuild relationships and to develop enough trust so that they are genuinely able to share their feelings and regain a positive sense of self and of their own potential agency. While these issues were expressed most forcibly in units for excluded young people and in special schools, they apply to a greater or lesser degree in all mainstream schools. For a significant number of young people, having a voice can only materialise from prolonged interactions with the teachers with whom they experience some success, some reason to trust in adults and to some ways in which they can gain a foothold in ‘the system’.

Salient message: While celebrating the success of particular strategies for pupil consultation and participation there is much greater scope for all pupils in schools to participate and be heard.

Autonomy and responsibility don’t come naturally

It is clear from the patterns of response in the pupil survey that most pupils perceive their influence on teaching, behaviour and assessment as very low, including their influence on their own learning. The survey also suggests, however, that the importance that pupils place on such influence is not very high either. While the aspiration gap is generally high, setting the bar relatively low may simply be a reflection of what pupils deem to be possible within classroom practice as they know it. The fact that Year 5 pupils are more sanguine than their older peers may say something either about the resilience and optimism of younger children and/or something about the

extent to which pupils have come to terms with the characteristic structures and conventions of secondary schools. There will also be pupils who harbour no urgent desire to be consulted and teachers may make false assumptions about pupils' readiness to extend their participation or about the areas in which the need for participation is paramount.

Pupils' perceptions about participation are held despite efforts in these schools to consult pupils through a range of initiatives. In the IPiL project we have seen excellent examples of innovative teachers working with pupils to help them develop the capacity to make choices and make their voices heard. This may be in the form of 'pupils as researchers' workshops or perhaps an initiative in which a team of pupils visits another school to see their school council at work. On the other hand it may be something more organic and embedded such as the dialogue that occurs between a teacher and a Year 5 pupil to help them make the right choice regarding their Learning Partner or which level of challenge to choose for a particular learning task. Nevertheless, it would appear that however strong the desire among schools to involve pupils in decision-making and however creative the initiatives, there is still considerable work to be done within the curriculum and within classroom pedagogy where it really counts. Within the workshop setting discussed at the beginning of this section, away from the daily routine and pressures of the classroom, pupils expressed their ambition to have a voice. It is clear, in that setting, that they will aspire to something higher if given the opportunity, the latitude and the trust.

In the same way that schools have had to learn how to carry out self-evaluation and teachers have had to learn to take responsibility for their professional development, pupils have to be taught how to participate fully in their own learning and to exercise influence over the conditions of learning. Children and young people are not necessarily equipped to take advantage of opportunities to voice their concerns or to influence the conditions of their learning. They first need to understand what learning is and what it could be; they need a language to talk about it and they need an enhanced sense of agency in order to develop the disposition to own their learning. Participation and influence involve a particular set of skills and dispositions which have to be carefully nurtured if our young people are to learn how to become good citizens.

Salient message: Pupils need to be taught how to fully participate in the learning enterprise which entails their understanding of the concept of learning and the conditions that favour it.

The importance of following through

Pupils and teachers alike mentioned the importance of follow-through. For pupils, nothing is more likely to sow the seeds of disillusion than for the time they give and the trust they invest not to be reciprocated in the form of

explicit response leading to concrete action. As one pupil wrote after the event 'It went very well because the teachers said that it will definitely happen!' Its success was premised on there being tangible outcomes.

Many of the teachers who participated in the workshops were the missionaries or true believers, with a personal commitment to authentic pupil participation but with a recognition of the 'real world' in which their commitment had to be tempered.

> *I am passionate that our young people are represented and are considered…So there was my initial positive response, and at the other end of the continuum was the practicality of doing that with a group of hard-pressed staff and unpredictable children.*
>
> (Unit manager)

And as a secondary deputy head admitted:

> *The SLT and middle leaders are all very happy with the notion but I think the moment those students say, 'Well, this is rubbish and this is terrible and actually what's the point of doing that?', we might stop buying in quite so much, or some people might stop buying in quite so much.*

The problem is that much of what pupils want can't be delivered. This may be either because it is unrealistic, too ambitious or because however good a proposal might be, there are often too many constraints, vested interests, conventions and priorities that take precedence. It is this dilemma that prevents many teachers from inviting expressions of voice. The counsel that it is 'better not to consult at all than to indulge pupils and then do nothing' has much to commend it.

One of the deep lessons of schooling, rarely taught but generally learned by everyone, is that there are things you can change, things you can't and that you have to learn early to understand the difference. 'Voice' is, in essence, about that maxim and that it should be learned not by default but explicitly engaged by exploring the horizons of the possible. So, being treated with respect means that an important aspect of your education is to understand how institutions work, the nature of hierarchy, authority and power, the micro-politics of schooling and the macro-politics in which schools' own latitude for change is embedded. While there is a body of opinion that children go to school to learn what is taught and not to question the structures within which that teaching occurs, Mary Alice White expresses the anti-educational nature of such an argument.

> *Imagine yourself on a ship sailing across an unknown sea, to an unknown destination. An adult would be desperate to know where he is going. But a child only knows he is going to school... The chart is neither available nor understandable to him... Very quickly,*

> *the daily life on board ship becomes all important ... The daily chores, the demands, the inspections, become the reality, not the voyage, nor the destination.*
>
> (Mary Alice White, 1971)

Salient message: For pupil participation to grow we need to ensure that voice leads to tangible change or a visible 'follow-through'.

C. Change and innovation

This section focuses on themes associated with processes of change and innovation.

No quick fixes

It is clear from these participating schools, as well as from a substantive body of research, that allowing children and young people a voice that can be heard and roles to play in their schools cannot be legislated in the short-term. It is a developmental process, an unfolding over time in which the key factors are:

- the culture, context and the history of the school itself
- the pressures and priorities for the school from policy directives and from the local community
- the commitment of the staff and key players within it
- the nature and heterogeneity of the pupil body and degree of a sense of belonging or disaffection with school

It is in the interplay of these factors that opportunities and constraints become salient in discussions of the scope for ascending what has been called 'the ladder of participation' (Hart, 1997; Schultz, 2003) from, at its lowest rung, 'adults decide and inform', to 'adults consult and decide', to 'adults and pupils decide together'. The extent to which these apply is highly contextual, not only in relation to the school's prior history and culture but regarding the nature of the issue in question and to whom consultation, voice and agency refer.

While it is clear that participative practices in the classroom are most likely to develop within a context in which staff have taken steps to build consultation processes it is also fair to say that the development of a partnership approach to learning is one of the key capacity-building

strategies (Gray *et al.,* 1999) that enable a school to move from being ineffective to being successful.

Salient message: The development of a culture of participation takes time and has to be addressed as a long-term capacity-building process.

Beyond the comfort zone

The more we explore with schools the difficulties and constraints they face in developing pupil consultation, the more we begin to understand that a key condition for fruitful and genuinely inclusive consultation is the recognition by all staff and students that school, although not a place that caters to all needs, can become a place in which all members can share space without fearing that their views and ideas will be tamed within a dominant and constricting school frame of reference and consultation.

Senior staff at one of our secondary schools were alert to the discomfort of developing opportunities for listening to critical or dissident voices. Such discomfort would be felt to some degree by everyone, but more acutely by some more than others. It involves risk to structures and conventions, to reputation, to authority, to values and to beliefs. It can create a sense of vulnerability and instability, and resistance is both inevitable and a matter of degree. The more we explore with schools the difficulties and constraints they face in developing pupil consultation, the more we begin to understand that a key condition for fruitful and genuinely inclusive consultation is learning to live with the discomfort of challenge and the impetus to be gained from constructive conflict. Holding apparently conflicting views in creative tension in the development of responses to pupil voice can prove a key challenge.

Schools are by nature hierarchical and, in some senses, workforce remodelling has made them even more complex and multi-layered. Within secondary schools in particular there is a need to create the space and find the 'wiggle room' for voices to be heard, for agency to be exercised and for what Lawrence-Lightfoot (2004) calls the 'essential conversation' to take place. While the vitality of the dialogue helps it to become embedded in 'the way we do things round here' there is continuing need to step back and keep the dialogue alive.

We get confirmation from this project of the importance of the support and challenge which come from a critical friend or external source and help school staff to revisit and reframe their practice. In Knowsley local authority the influence of a Research Officer helped staff to *'let the children be in charge'* through practical example, enabling teachers to grasp the pupils' potential for leadership and independent learning, and in turn to become more courageous in promoting greater pupil independence in their own teaching.

Salient message: School staff need support from external sources to help them cope with the discomfort of dissidence and challenge that are an inevitable manifestation of voice and shared leadership.

The moral imperative

It is evident that some teachers in the participating schools have a strong sense of moral purpose based on the belief that, through their experience at school, children not only discover their possible selves but also learn how to be effective citizens in a just society. Others take a narrower view of their responsibility. Where teachers have this moral sense they look for opportunities to enhance pupils' agency. For example, in a special school where pupils were offered the opportunity to make the kind of choices that most of us take for granted, teachers were courageously pushing at the boundaries of pupil choice knowing that for children with profound and multiple difficulties the most significant challenge is to learn to live independently as adults. For this school the prime goal is to transform the culture from being a caring and controlling one to being one focused on learning. The pupils' capacity to see themselves as learners and to reflect on their growing capacity is seen as the key to participation and influence.

As a strategy for developing participation and influence, consultation is not straightforward. Where consultation fails and voice becomes a cruel deception is where it is simply decorative, ritualised, often through questionnaires and projects but without the critical next step that follows on. As one member of a secondary staff put it:

> *I think if you're going to build students up and give them the time, then there's actually a moral responsibility to do something with that afterwards. It's no good saying, 'Thank you very much. You think lessons at this school are rubbish do you? Thanks for that', and then that's the end of it. There has to be something that follows it. Because otherwise you're not actually empowering them, you're actually doing the opposite. You're actually confirming to them that they've got no power and they've got no influence.*

Evidence from the case study visits suggests that there is a very high level of moral purpose in our schools but it is not necessarily focused on the need for pupils to influence the conditions of their own learning. This is a key challenge for leadership.

Salient message: There is a need to constantly highlight the moral purpose that lies at the centre of pupil participation and influence.

The challenge of change

> *There's work to be done in opening staff's minds to the fact that pupils really do have a voice that's worth listening to.*

This comment was made by a member of a secondary school SLT. He identified three different categories of staff response. The first category is those staff who are very much in favour of it and see it as important and valuable. A second response is to agree that it's a good idea in principle, but, when faced with some uncomfortable truths, to question its validity. The third set of responses is 'How dare they? We are the adults. They are the children'.

There are echoes here of Michael Schratz's categories of missionaries and true believers, lip servers and outright opponents. He adds a further category of underground workers and emigrants, the former the most inimical group because of their insidious work in undermining confidence behind the scenes. Meanwhile, the second group – the emigrants – are tired teachers who have seen it all and been round too long, and may have already left even though their bodies have remained behind (Schratz, 1998: 168).

This is not necessarily a counsel of despair as optimistic leaders have clung firmly to the belief that no one's motivation is irretrievable and that growing a culture of trust and evidence of change can convince even the most hardened cynic. There is good evidence in some of the schools participating in the IPiL project that more participative approaches can be built using a combination of explicit initiatives and more indirect culture-building strategies. Schools have adopted explicit strategies which have good support in the research and in accounts of practice in others, for example 'peer assessment' or 'negotiated classroom behaviour rules'. Senior leaders have also worked in a piecemeal way to build a participative culture through appropriate intervention in relation to critical incidents. These more dramatic, often high profile, moments in a school's life test the extent to which consultation and participation are real. How one behaves in a crisis is perhaps the most telling indicator of how deeply values are embedded in the school's day-to-day practice.

Salient message: Senior and middle leaders need to focus on the culture building and staff development that support the growth of a more participative approach to the relationship between teachers and pupils.

Challenges to professionalism

There is no doubt that some teachers regard empowerment of pupils as a threat to their own authority and position as a leader of learning. The boundary that defines what is the responsibility of the teacher and that of the

pupil begins to become blurred as we develop more participative strategies. The account of pupils carrying out lesson observations, for example, strikes some teachers as a step too far. Feedback to teachers and lesson observation by pupils also engender anxiety unless there are clear ground rules entered into in a spirit of genuine inquiry. There was some anxiety among teachers that pupils would come to the class with their own preconceptions and see what they wanted to see, then reflecting this in his/her feedback. They expressed a desire for evidence-based feedback rather than personal judgement, underpinned by a worry that pupils' judgements would fail to take account of the background and developmental sequence of the lesson and fail to perceive the expertise and teachers' time invested in planning objectives and activities.

From the pupils' point of view, they were concerned that teachers would not listen or agree with them, or might take offence, reacting badly to critical feedback and taking a personal dislike to the pupil. From their side, teachers were nervous that their pupils might share their feedback with others. In one primary school it was emphasised as a precondition of pupil participation that there be trust and confidentiality between teachers and pupils and that even the project co-ordinator would not know what feedback had been given to the teachers. This required planning and training in advance of any such interventions so that both parties would feel comfortable in their respective roles.

More generally there is a danger in privileging the voice of pupils over the voice of staff who may become resentful not only of their own failure being heard but also resentful of the latitude and indulgence accorded to pupils.

Dissatisfaction may be exacerbated by the tensions which teachers experience between mandated reform, the demands and pressures from targets, testing and external accountability and the time and space to attend to what is important as well as urgent. High staff absence only compounds the pressure. This may be further compounded by what some staff referred to as the instability of many pupils' out-of-school lives, reducing their capacity for participation and creating problems for enthusiastic teachers who try to recruit pupils, and their colleagues, into a closer collaborative, or research, partnership.

The issue of professionalism was also highlighted by the tendency of some Teaching and Learning Assistants (TLAs) to not appreciate the importance of allowing freedom for pupils to express their views and to make choices. Some teachers in the project schools aired their frustration with regard to TLAs' understanding of this, and Regional Team Leaders observed a number of occasions when TLAs were dismissive of pupils' attempts to participate in the project. In one case, the TLA effectively withdrew a school from the project's activities on the grounds that *'the pupils can't cope with this sort of activity'*.

Salient message: Teachers need support in reframing their professional identity so that their authority is not threatened by sharing responsibility for the learning enterprise.

Leadership is the key

Without leadership pupil voice may be merely an ephemeral initiative with a short shelf life, and not understood as integral to teaching, learning, school self-evaluation and school improvement. As this project has shown, headteachers and senior leadership teams have to show their commitment not only to the project but to moral purpose. As one primary school teacher described it, it is given momentum and energy by 'a combination of a 'free-thinking headteacher' who listens to all staff, a pupil-centred environment where good ideas are welcomed from any quarter and a strong staff team who have ownership over the development plan and invest in their own professional development'. These all help to illustrate key values and underpin good relationships essential for participation.

It has been evident throughout the IPiL project that leadership is not the sole preserve of senior staff. Much of it is exercised by teachers and other adults 'without portfolio', but with exemplary qualities of leadership and management. And as numerous examples attest, leadership by pupils, even in the lower reaches of primary schools can have a significant impact in changing their schools, their classrooms and their own lives. In the project we have a rich body of pupil-led work in which schools' strategies for participation and influence have been illuminated and held up to critical scrutiny.

Achieving coherence between the development of a participative culture, a dialogic pedagogy and distinct initiatives or strategies for pupil consultation and participation demands skilled leadership. We dare not assume that such cultures simply grow like bio-cultures when particular strategies are implanted. There is no recipe for coherence because it demands a sound analysis of the culture and history of an institution and the sensitive response to events as the culture develops.

Salient message: The development of a coherent, participative culture demands skilled and determined leadership, distributed widely within the school

Smile before Christmas?

A book written by novice American teachers entitled *Don't Smile Until Christmas* contained the counsel given to many young teachers to start tough, remain in control, don't allow your authority to be compromised until you are patently in charge. The advice is pragmatic and generally

sound. There are dangers in empathy and over-identification. Teachers who understand too much can end up paralysed by indecision, particularly in the case of newly qualified, young teachers separated from their oldest pupils by perhaps only four or five years. The dangers of starting a new class by inviting pupils' expression of opinions is a perilous path for all but the strongest, most self-confident adults. As a new member of staff, eyes wide open to limitations of schooling, what do you do if you are led to believe that the curriculum is totally unsuited to some children's needs? That the classroom is the wrong place for this child? That your colleagues are repressive and stifling creativity?

Those early days of testing the limits with a new, or novice, teacher is a rock on which many a teaching career has foundered. As Maurice Galton has found in the case of novice teachers, even one of the major canons of assessment for learning - 'wait time' or 'thinking time' - has to be treated with caution. Four or five seconds is enough to allow the pace of the lesson to move from the teacher's to the pupils' control.

There are important lessons for policy making, for school leadership, for mentoring and for school staff to know where, when and with whom participation, research and expression of voice need careful tending and support. By the same token, where, when and with whom do long-established practices and resistance need to be challenged?

As we argue elsewhere in this report, on the basis of survey returns from children and young people:

> *A good starting point for schools might be in finding shared spaces at school in which teachers can listen and understand the values and dispositions that pupils bring to their lives at school. Current practices of pupil voice initiatives with an instrumental focus on school improvement and enhancing learning opportunities appear to be developing on a faulty assumption about the school careers, identities and values of many pupils.*

It is not only about where children and young people are in their aspirations and values but where teachers are as well, and the extent to which they are both captive of the policies, structures and deeply internalised habits with which they work. Breaking the mould is long-term and challenging work and, as with change, the first stage may be a 'nightmare'. As one teacher described it:

> *It has to be a nightmare first, that things often have to go wrong in order for there to be reflection and for pupils to think 'How could we have done it better?'*

It is at this stage that teachers are most likely to draw back and call it a failure. However, it requires brave leadership at both a senior and teacher

level, and a high degree of congruence between them. Ultimately it is to the benefit of everyone, making for more exhilarating learning, more enjoyable and effective teaching and school as a much better place to be.

Salient message: Breaking the mould of repressive practices requires courage.

Section 3
Practice: portraits and principles

Innovations and review of practice

This section focuses on practices that enable pupils to participate more fully in the learning process and to make their influence felt.

This is done in two ways. First, there are brief descriptions of innovative practices that illustrate the range of participative strategies currently occurring in schools. These portrayals of practical strategies are drawn from evidence in the case study reports, the pupils own research reports and records of the discussions in our regional workshops. Second, we put forward a set of principles that could be used to guide practitioners in their discussions about possible ways forward.

Practices such as those described here should not be seen simply as good ideas that can be implemented off the shelf but rather they need to be seen within their own organisational contexts. The principles are offered as a means to support schools and practitioners in reviewing their own practice and the culture of their schools as organisations or communities to determine the most appropriate focus for strategic development.

Portraits of practice

The schools which took part in this study were alive to the issues discussed in the previous section and had among them employed a diverse range of strategies and tools to increase participation in school and classroom life and enable pupils to exercise influence. These are described under the headings of:

1. School surveys
2. School Councils and consultative forums
3. Negotiating rules
4. Positions of responsibility
5. Pupils' roles in staff selection
6. Reviews and self-evaluation
7. Pupils as researchers
8. Pupils as evaluators of teaching
9. Pupils' choices in learning
10. Teaching, mentoring and mediation
11. School news

1. School surveys

Surveys and questionnaires are one of the most common forms of gathering pupil views. These cover a wide range of purposes and formats, in some

cases designed to consult pupils about their experience of school in general and in some cases ad hoc surveys which address specific issues that have arisen in the course of the school term or year. Some focus directly on classroom activity while others are concerned with other physical and welfare aspects such as playground provision, toilets, lunches and tuck shops.

The expectation that accompanies surveys is that some action will accrue as a result of the consultation process so that a playground audit for example will culminate in pupil participation in the design of playgrounds and that lunch menus will change to accommodate pupil preferences. It is in relation to the playgrounds and toilets that there are visible, and sometimes highly impressive, outcomes of pupil participation. The tangible demonstration of pupils' imagination and creativity in addressing these issues may encourage schools to extend the scope of participation to other areas of influence.

2. School Councils and consultative forums

Schools Councils are one the most longstanding forums for pupils to express their view, sometimes with latitude for actual decision-making. Councils are normally representative of different years or age groups and may be elected by pupil vote or appointed by staff. There is sometimes a teacher presence on Councils and in some cases teachers also chair the Council. This may be necessary in special schools or with younger pupils but the chairing of the Council provides a valuable experience for pupils. Some Councils do allow pupils the final decision in some matters, for example giving them a budget which they are free to spend on whatever they choose. While sometimes seen as risky there is no evidence that pupils are reckless with the latitude given them and again the trust and responsibility invested in them pays off in a number of ways.

The Council may be complemented by a year forum in which pupils debate issues at year (or perhaps even classroom) level so that issues are carried forward to the larger Council. Some of the schools in this study had a website allowing the School Council to broadcast its agendas and recommendations and also enabling pupils to upload their comments.

3. Negotiating rules

Discussing, negotiating and recasting school rules tend to fall within the domain of the School Council. These sometimes take the form of 'Golden Rules' and may encompass uniform, conduct around the school and in the playground, and involve decisions on sanctions, incentives and rewards. These may be complemented by discussions at classroom level of rules and sanctions although very often rule making is a routine classroom process at the beginning of the school year and not necessarily connected to the work of the Council. In the classroom context pupils may produce displays of the rules, putting these up in the classroom and reviewing/amending them at the start of each term.

4. Positions of responsibility

Prefects and school monitors have been an established part of schools for a century and more but historically with more licence than responsibility and less seen as service to one's peers and to younger children. Prefects were often chosen as a cadre of high achievers or high status pupils. Currently, responsibility may be given to pupils for a variety of reasons; for example pupils with special needs may be given responsibilities so as to exemplify the school's inclusiveness. Pupils may occupy roles of playground mentors, stewards at parent evenings, backstage at school concerts or front of stage emceeing. In primary schools it is increasingly common to find pupils answering the phone and welcoming visitors – both evidencing a high degree of trust in pupils' ability to rise to the occasion.

5. Pupils' roles in staff selection

Councils, or Council representatives may play a role in staff selection or promotion. These are consultative rather than decision-making opportunities and tend to take place prior to the formal interview at which sensitive issues may be raised and so it is deemed unsuitable for pupils to be present. Pupils will either simply meet candidates informally or conduct their own interview process. Experience suggests that pupils act responsibly, sensitively and intelligently. Very often they bring a particular insight and their choices tend to coincide with those of the formal panel. Typically pupils will be prepared for what they are going to ask and some rehearsal will take place, although allowing for spontaneous questions does lend a greater ownership and vitality to the occasion.

6. Reviews and self-evaluation

Participation by pupils in reviewing aspects of school life takes a number of forms. Unlike surveys which tend to be designed and administered by adults, reviews may be instigated and conducted by pupils themselves. The focus of reviews varies widely to encompass school life generally, curriculum, assessment, or extra-curricular activities for example. Among schools in this study there were examples of the following:

- Curriculum review in which staff meet to review a curriculum unit, drawing pupils into the process and sometimes using evidence gathered by the pupils themselves.

- Learning Review Days in which pupils are involved in a process, drawing together assessment data, reflecting on what has been achieved and setting the targets for future learning.

- Peer and self-assessment, which gives pupils greater autonomy in using assessment criteria to judge their own and each other's work. Asking them to come up with the criteria by which to judge what makes good work both gives a greater sense of ownership and evaluative skills.

- Pupil-led parent consultation evenings in which pupils carry out their own self-review and then invite their parents to come to the school to discuss the review with the teacher and sometimes with the headteacher present.

These may be activities undertaken on an ad hoc basis and serving an objective at a given time within a school's cycle of planning and improvement. These activities may feed into school self-evaluation, a process in which pupils have a significant role to play. There is a danger within the protocols of Ofsted's New Relationship with Schools and the Self-Evaluation Form (the SEF) that pupil participation and initiative are marginalised or ritualised. All forms of reflection, inquiry, review and evaluation should be seen as feeding into school self-evaluation and as data to present to inspection teams, telling the school's story.

7. Pupils as researchers

Researching aspects of school life is closely associated with self-evaluation and other forms of review but also may be seen as an activity in its own right with the purpose of helping pupils to acquire the skills, ethics and insights of the researcher. These may be highly relevant to subject work as well as to career and vocational futures. Schools in this study would invite pupils to join a group through which they are inducted into research techniques and invited to carry out their own inquiries and present the outcomes to other pupils and staff. Again, self-evaluation needs to take account of such pupil enterprise because it is an essential part of the school's quality narrative.

8. Pupils as evaluators of teaching

In some schools pupils are invited to observe lessons. The focus may be on what the teacher is doing, but choosing to focus on a specific pupil or a group of pupils to chart their activity over the course of a lesson can provide valuable formative feedback to the teacher so that he/she becomes more aware of when pupils are most and least engaged and what it is that raises or lowers motivation. Lesson observation is usually accompanied by observation schedules, protocols or guidelines with training for pupils in the skills and ethics of observation.

9. Pupils' choices in learning

Teachers may be threatened by pupils inquiring into teaching but find it less challenging when their pupils focus on themselves as learners. For example, there are many different approaches commonly used to ask pupils how they prefer to learn. Investigating learning styles and preferences has enjoyed a considerable vogue in the last five years or so. Some schools use multiple intelligences as triggers for dialogue rather than restrictive labelling such as the now well-known and much rehearsed VAK (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic) 'styles'.

Collaborative planning of topic-based learning is a strategy used by schools to draw pupils into the planning process, asking them to suggest topics and using mind maps to help plan the strands of learning within a future topic.

Topic-based learning, particularly in primary schools, allows pupils greater flexibility in choosing the learning activities that match their interests and preferences. This may be accompanied by reflection and self-evaluation.

Target setting, for example asking pupils to specify the *must, could and should* in relation to a given learning objective, has also been used. A close ally of this is 'Choosing the challenge' in which pupils are asked to choose among four levels of challenge in relation to a given learning objective.

Increasing choice and encouraging responsibility are also themes in free activity days**.** This involves putting on a variety of extra-curricular activities during a particular day (in the case of one school, once a fortnight), allowing children to choose activities which build skills, confidence and self-direction.

10. Teaching, mentoring and mediation

It may be assumed that pupils go to school to learn whereas as we know from both research and practice that pupils learn best when they teach others. We also know that teaching or supporting others' learning contributes to the personal and social repertoire of skills and self-confidence. Senior pupils in one of these study schools contributed to the teaching of modern languages in primary schools, one way in which they can be of service while enhancing their own career profile.

Pupils may also play a role as mentors to their peers. This works particularly well in the context of 'Vertical Tutoring' in secondary schools, typically older pupils who benefit by the giving advice to others and, once again, develop a repertoire of skills that will serve them well in a range of occupations.

Peer mediation also provides a context in which pupils can extend their repertoire, applied in a situation in which intervening in disputes between pupils requires a high level of social skill, self-knowledge and understanding of human behaviour.

11. School News

Giving pupils responsibility to report the news of the school day, week, month or year serves a number of functions. As well as serving the important function of disseminating to parents, community and to pupils themselves what the school is doing and achieving, it offers a range of skill development for pupils involved.

The school newspaper may be a weekly or monthly publication or a more modest daily news roundup but it demands a wide range of skills in

planning, presentation, design, writing and editing, sense of audience, working to deadlines, teamwork and coping with pressure. Many of these skills feed back into the curriculum and have a strong vocational element but perhaps above all give young people a huge boost to their self-confidence, sense of responsibility and their contribution to the school.

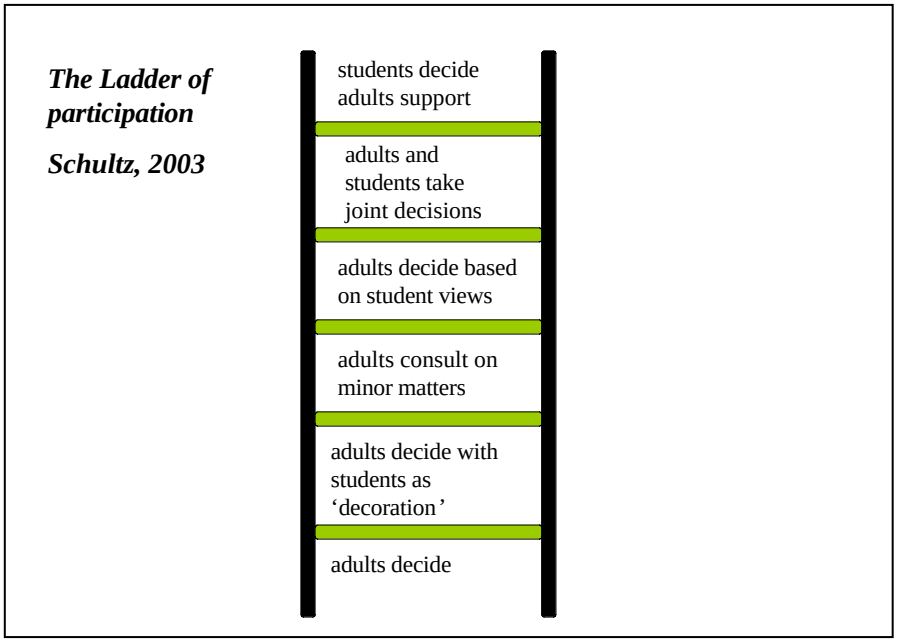
Examples of schools with their own radio station may be few but in common with the production of a newspaper, radio news encompasses a number of valuable skills. News bulletins, accomplishments by pupils, recognition for teacher or staff accomplishments and special events may be broadcast together with music requests at lunchtimes, before and after school and at other agreed intervals in the day or week, for example the last twenty minutes of the day.

News may also be conveyed through bulletin boards or more up-to-date video screens located in the school foyer, assembly hall, corridors or other open spaces.

These are just some of the activities and practices evident in the schools participating in the IPiL project. However, it must be emphasised that it is not recommended that the implementation of such strategies will in themselves amount to a transformation of the relationship between pupils and their learning. Such activities must be seen in relation to a more comprehensive development of the pedagogic culture of the school.

Principles for practice

All of the activities described above may be placed somewhere on the ladder of participation. There are various versions of this. Per Schultz Jorgensen, the Danish educator suggests the following:



Where one places any given activity on the ladder will depend on the purpose - so that pupils performing at a concert, or greeting visitors could be 'decoration' or could occupy a position further up the ladder. Refurbishing toilets may exemplify consultation 'on minor matters' or may occupy either of the top two rungs and seen as a major issue in school ethos and pupil empowerment. The bottom rung of the ladder is 'adults decide' but when there is a very clear rationale and pupils are aware of why and how executive decisions are made it is liberating in respect of other areas of pupil participation.

Teachers' constant expression of surprise as to what pupils were capable of reveals what researchers have described as 'the treasure within', still to be extensively mined. The principles which follow, therefore, are both aspirational but also realistic, both setting the bar high but also drawn from leading-edge practice in schools in this study. They should constitute a useful set of criteria that teachers and schools can use to review and evaluate their practice and are offered as a tool to enable practitioners, young people and their parents, policy makers and researchers to debate educational aims in relation to the participation and influence of children and young people in their learning.

The principles which follow have to be set within the wider frame of reference that the team brought to this project. The work with these young people and teachers reinforces, enhances and tests what we already know about pupil participation so that these principles have deeper roots than in this project alone, but this particular study has both created and affirmed the nature and value of participation.

The principles

Pupil participation in their own learning is enhanced when:

- School structures are designed to encourage and support participation
- Pupil participation and influence are embodied in the culture
- The relationship between teachers and pupils is seen as a partnership for learning
- The experience and expertise of pupils are drawn upon as resources for learning and school improvement
- Teaching is responsive to the needs and interests of pupils and creates space for a learning dialogue to occur
- Pupils are able to exercise choice and agency in all aspects of their learning

- Pupils have opportunities to participate in school-wide decision-making

- Everyone, including pupils, is encouraged to exercise leadership as appropriate to task and context with opportunities for leadership to be a shared activity

- Everyone, including pupils, is encouraged to engage in systematic inquiry and reflection focusing on the nature of learning and the experience of schooling

- Pupils are key players in school self-evaluation, an ongoing process embedded at classroom, school and community levels

As the evidence shows these principles are not unproblematic and do not come easily to teachers in a climate where there are practical constraints related to curriculum coverage and testing requirements. Nor can it simply be assumed that pupils will be willing and enthusiastic collaborators as they too are under pressure and may be impatient with anything that distracts from 'getting through' and surmounting the test and examination hurdles.

There is often an implicit collusion between teachers and pupils as to what really matters, so it is assumed that learning beyond schooling or learning for life will take care of themselves when the time comes. If these pragmatic assumptions are to be undermined teachers and pupils need to believe that participation will achieve those immediate instrumental goals as well as the wider goals of lifelong learning.

The implications are for a culture in which the entry point into the school for pupils and for new staff is not only a commitment to pupil participation but with demonstrative evidence that participation achieves both short-term instrumental goals and serves long-term goals in the process. Pupils' first experience of a new school is therefore that their experience and expertise are recognised and that they truly believe that their ideas will be listened to and their feelings acknowledged. The counterfoil is recognition of this as a communal right, implying respect for others' views, however much one may disagree. As skilful mediator, the teacher establishes that the process of 'education' is learning to live with differences, to disagree constructively and to express one's own values with an understanding of audience. This is expressed by Hartman Von Hentig in his series of letters to his fictional nephew Tobias, in answer to his query 'Why should I have to go to school?' The kindly, and wise, uncle replies:

> *In school you meet people different from yourself from different backgrounds, children you can observe, talk to, ask questions, for example someone from Turkey or Vietnam, a devout Catholic or an out and out atheist, boys and girls, a mathematical whiz kid, a child*

> *in a wheelchair... I believe whole heartedly that the open school is there first and foremost to bring young people together and to help them to learn to live in a way that our political society so badly needs.*
>
> (Hentig, 2001: 47 cited in MacBeath, 2002: 39-40)

Creating the kind of open climate that is implied here is long-term and not without risk. Schools need to be prepared for stories and perspectives from pupils about their lives at school that call into question much of what teachers and school leaders do and much of what they take for granted about learning, participation and consultation. The questions that schools are prepared to ask their pupils then become at least as important as what pupils say. For any school that takes responsiveness to pupils' views seriously, these questions must be clear of only participation and influence they value. Schools must enter into dialogue without conviction, with a measure of courage and a preparedness to deal with resistance, obstacles and inevitable setbacks on the way.

It should be emphasised that there are no clear recipes for action. Rather it is recommended that schools engage in a review of practice using the principles offered above as a framework for reflection and perhaps using some of the tools offered in Appendix 3 to gather evidence and scaffold discussion.

Section 4
Lessons for policy development

Issues for consideration by policy makers

This final section sets out a number of key implications for policy development at national, local authority and school levels. These implications are drawn from the discussion of themes in Section 2 and are supported by wider research findings.

The over-arching message is that in order to improve pupils' learning we need to develop a more participative approach to schooling, and in order to do this we need a participative change strategy. The evidence gathered in the IPiL project supports the view that the development of practice in this area is particularly challenging. It is important therefore that policy and practice are constructed progressively through dialogue and the reframing of priorities on the basis of accounts of leading-edge practice.

In policy development, pupils' influence and their participation as full partners in learning need to be recognised as essential in the pursuit of enhanced achievement. This implies a need for effective guidance as to how participation and influence can be integrated into learning, teaching and assessment.

There is evidence through the IPiL project that pupils experience fewer opportunities to influence and participate in the learning process when they make the transition to their secondary schools. There is evidence of valuable consultative strategies being in place in secondary schools and of some efforts to ease the transition from primary to secondary school. Nevertheless there remains scope for the development of policies that encourage and facilitate more effective collaboration between schools, especially where this focuses on pupils' experience of learning rather than data such as targets, grades and levels.

It is important that, as newly qualified teachers are inducted into the culture of a school, they are able to recognise opportunities for pupils to be partners in the learning enterprise. This is a consideration for ITE programmes as well as schools.

The evidence suggests that some teachers feel disenfranchised or threatened by attempts to build a more participative climate. This has to be viewed in the larger policy context of de-professionalisation. Pupils' agency and participation will not be realised without teachers themselves having a genuine sense of agency as architects of school and classroom policy and practice.

School leaders need to consider the building of a culture of inquiry in which both teachers and pupils are supported in gathering evidence, debating its

meaning and feeding into self-evaluation and improvement planning. Within the New Relationship with Schools, pupils' contribution should be seen as integral to their role as learners, researchers and knowledge creators.

Conclusion

This report constitutes what we hope is an accessible account of a project that was itself participative but at the same time focused and purposeful. The primary aim was to uncover practices that enable pupils to participate in the learning process and to be influential in shaping the conditions and direction of their learning. The project was designed to explore participation through a methodological approach which we hoped would generate rich data within a safe and stimulating context but would at the same time identify principles which 'travel' successfully into day-to-day classroom and school practice. We hoped in conjunction with this to leave a legacy and create a ripple effect which would continue to affect thinking and practice among those who participated and in their relations with others who had not been part of the project.

The outcomes of the project are set out in the preceding pages in terms of the issues and salient messages for practitioners, the portraits of practice, the principles that might influence future development and the lessons that policy makers need to consider. There are a few points that may be worth underscoring here.

It seems clear that the goal for the education system in this country has to be to create more participative cultures in which dialogic relationships, partnerships for learning and consultative practices are integrated into the day-to-day practice of the school. It is now widely accepted that pupils are not simply passive consumers of what schools have to offer but that, without an understanding of their 'voice', the educational process is seriously compromised. Disaffection and alienation express themselves in discipline problems and tightened control and in short-term expedient measures which tend to exacerbate rather than ameliorate the problem. In short we need to recruit pupils as full partners in learning.

Pedagogy is at the heart of teachers' professionalism. It is the profession's core business. The aim of the art and science of teaching is to discover how to realise the full potential of children and young people as learners, and the IPiL project has highlighted the powerful role that pupil influence plays in that enterprise. There is clear evidence that influence is exercised to some extent through consultative processes and that the sense of ownership and belonging can be enhanced within schools through the expression of 'pupil voice'. However, even more powerful than this, is the opportunity that exists for pupils to influence the nature and direction of their learning by direct participation. By being given opportunities to make choices within the learning process pupils can exercise considerable influence and achieve a real sense of being in the driving seat of their own learning.

This study suggests that primary schools seem to have greater potential to create participative climates and that pupils' experience of the learning environment may change quite markedly when they transfer to the secondary school. The growing tendency towards collaboration between schools may well present opportunities to address this problem so that secondary school staff and the system as a whole are able to build on the gains that many pupils have made in their primary schools.

There are some fundamental principles that shape our values in relation to participation and influence. These focus on the need to allow human agency to flourish within learning communities – not only for pupils but also for teachers and other people who work in schools. The journey that children make from dependent infants to mature members of a democratic and civil society will be given momentum by their experience of participative processes throughout their school days. Active citizenship, an aspiration of government everywhere, cannot be realised without tangible expressions of respect for children's identity as human beings whose voice needs both to be heard and shaped to give it expression with a sense of context and audience. We cannot afford to allow the easily measurable indicators of the school's quality and effectiveness to divert attention from that larger goal of just and civil citizenship.

This requires the courage and sensitivity to open up the possibility of sharing power and responsibility but in concert with the kinds of strategies, tools and techniques described in this report. It is self-evidently not just a matter of releasing the bounds in the hope that pupils' right to be heard will automatically flourish nor is it simply a matter of deploying a set of tools and techniques. It requires a developmental mindset in which senior leaders enable their colleagues to engage in systematic review of practice. It is a form of self-evaluation which is ongoing and embedded, not a ritual data collection or prelude to an Ofsted visit. It is one that draws pupils themselves into the process of evaluation, planning and development. The practices explored in this project and the tools offered in the Appendices, we hope, will be used reflectively and selectively to build participative and self-evaluation strategies as part of a coherent development process. It should be one in which attention is paid to informal communication, pedagogical styles and values as well as specific consultative initiatives.

There are no quick fixes. It takes time to build confidence and trust between pupils and teachers. It takes time to move beyond the comfort zone and to recognise that there may be more effective ways of doing things. It requires support and a strong sense of internal accountability to challenge established practice and to take risks. We offer the principles set out in Section 3 as a key tool to be used as a framework for review. It is hoped that members of the teaching profession will use these principles, not as a set of criteria to judge performance but as a starting point for reflection and debate.

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Appendix 1

Case studies

The project team carried out visits to seven of the participating schools and drew on detailed evidence from three more. Additional evidence included DVDs made by students in three of the schools.

Four of the case studies are summarised here in order to provide more detailed portraits of participative practice in their school contexts.

Case summary A

A Listening School: The Wroxham School[1]

The school context

This primary school in Hertfordshire has changed markedly in the last few years. In 2001 Ofsted inspectors placed the school in 'special measures', precipitating the departure of the head teacher and the appointment in January 2003 of a new Head. Her clear and imaginative leadership has enabled the school to undergo a radical transformation. In 2006 inspectors judged it to be 'outstanding'. The inspectors' letter noted the pervasive influence of the 'learning without limits' philosophy reflecting the Head's involvement in that project. 'Learning without limits' (Hart *et al*., 2004) was an empirical study of teachers who opposed ability-focused practices in all their forms and proposed an alternative anti-determinist pedagogic model. The commitment to an inclusive consultative culture is made explicit on the school website, which headlines participation, voice, choice, dialogue and self-direction.

- We believe that all children should participate fully in our school
- All members of our school community have a voice
- Children are given choices about their learning
- Formative assessment and a dialogue about teaching and learning is key
- Children challenge themselves and set their own targets
- Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are included fully in all areas of school life

[1] The school is the focus of an in-depth study funded by the Esme Fairburn Foundation and Hertfordshire CSF (Peacock and Swann forthcoming). See also: www.educ.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/lwl

‘Working together, aiming high’ is the school mission statement reflected in a commitment to inclusion which does not label by ability and strives for a democratic approach to every aspect of school life. Friendly collaborative relationships and happiness combined with rigour and high standards in a wide range of subject areas and rigour were commented on by HMI in an October 2007 inspection.

Consultation strategies include:

- ‘Circle Time’ which centres on a 20-minute session led by Year 6 students on a weekly basis

- ‘The worry box’, which sits in the classroom and pupils are invited to write down a concern on a piece of paper and put it into the box when they are unable to speak directly to the teacher about it

- Promoting choice and avoiding compulsion in activities such as Sports Day and Marathons

- Embedding choice in learning and teaching so that pupils are able to influence the nature and direction of their learning

- Pupil-led self-evaluation framing discussion with parents

Formal consultation strategies may be the most obvious forms of pupil participation but, in the Head’s view, they are not the most important. She takes issue with the assumptions and terminology of consultation, carrying implications of something formal or bureaucratic. For her it implies adults consulting children with an adult agenda rather than seeing it as a genuine form of partnership in which ‘the needs and wants of the children are at the forefront’. She prefers to conceptualise pupil voice and consultation as essential dimensions of the relationship between adults and pupils and as embedded in the pedagogy of the school. Ways in which pupils are partners in their learning while largely invisible have, nonetheless, the most powerful impact.

Opting in: Circle Time

The school is divided up into groups of about 20 pupils from each year group. Each group meets at the same time with Year 6 pupils taking roles such as Chair, Secretary and so on. The teacher plays a supportive role, helping children to prepare for the meetings. The agenda is set in an iterative way and linked to major milestones and events. Wroxham Time, for example is where children can opt into one item on a menu of activity. Children identify items to be included in the menu with each suggestion recorded by the pupil acting as secretary, followed by voting on preferred activities (eyes closed so as to ensure independent choice). The Year 6

teacher then liaises with the Head and staff about the outcomes. When the resulting menu is published, each pupil will be asked to make their choice which commits them to a particular activity for 4 weeks.

Pupils and teachers report that it is possible for pupils to raise other issues and to identify items for the agenda of future meetings. The decision to have a 'quiet garden' was one of the highly valued outcomes of Circle Time. Year 6 pupils put forward a number of design proposals which were then discussed and voted on. Similarly the 'Golden Rules' that govern behaviour in the school as a whole were proposed, discussed and decided on in Circle Time.

The 'worry box' provides opportunities for pupils to comment on things they don't understand or want more help with. It may include complaints or problems with friendships. Pupils report that the teachers 'try to improve the lessons' in response to pupils' concerns.

Learning to choose: a matter of pedagogy

The pedagogic style is negotiable, responsive and flexible. A key feature is the opportunity for choice, not simply a free-for-all but rather a series of carefully structured opportunities that allow pupils a degree of control over the process of learning, enabling them to learn the skills and dispositions of choice making. The principle of choice is so organic and pervasive a process that children, particularly the younger ones, are not even conscious of it.

> *Because we were making a 'Choices DVD'… The Year 6s went round to every class asked the children to tell them about the choices they had in their classroom ... my children said "I don't understand what you mean," so we had to say to them "in other schools when you do a Maths lesson you would be told what work you have to do" … "Would we?" ... "and you'd be told where to sit." … "Would we? You mean we wouldn't be able to choose where to sit?" Because they have grown up with it since they were tiny they don't see it as anything special, they see it as normal.*
>
> (Yr 3 teacher)

Choice in the curriculum is exemplified in themed topic work in which a class adopts a theme (e.g. The Aztecs). Mind maps enable pupils to think about how a project might unfold and encourage them to articulate their ideas about what should be included. The teacher then discusses these ideas and draws up an overall plan and maps onto it the National Curriculum objectives. Teachers see this as an informal style of curriculum planning in which pupils can have an influence in deciding on future topics.

Topics such as 'Operation Care' – about the nurturing of both humans and animals for example – are chosen by pupils themselves. They also suggest activities that could be incorporated within the project. Each child has a folder containing their mind maps and pieces of work which is used as a basis for reflection on their learning at the end of each topic.

This approach has raised challenges regarding assessment and the way reports to parents are constructed but consultations with parents so far have been very positive because, according to the teachers concerned, the children seem to be going home full of enthusiasm for their topic work and talking more about their learning with their parents.

One of the choices taken for granted in classrooms at Wroxham is the question of whom to work with. Pupils have opportunities to work with their peers in small groups and in pairs. Each child has an identified 'Learning Partner', carefully chosen by the pupils themselves in consultation with their class teacher. Children do not work with their learning partners all the time but only when the learning activity is suited to this. Pupils also work with other pupils depending on the nature of the activity and the level of challenge they have selected for themselves. They are taught to make sensible choices about who to work with for a given learning task in consultation with their teacher.

Pupils are usually offered a number of levels or challenges, a system that allows pupils to set their own targets and encourages them to challenge themselves.

> *At first when I came here I just thought that they were going to choose the easiest piece of work – I thought the brighter ones would try and have a ride really – and its just not the case. They want to challenge themselves – if anything I find that a lot of the time I have to steer children back down a level towards things that they are capable of than having to push them forward.*
>
> (Yr 5 teacher)

This Year 5 teacher describes it as 'a continuous dialogue' which helps pupils to 'take responsibility for their own learning'. The teacher role is described as facilitative rather than directive, expressed through 'Learning Conversations' in which the teacher sits down for a ten-minute one-to-one review with each child while the Teaching Assistant monitors activity in the classroom. The learning conversation reviews learning goals, learning difficulties and any concerns a pupil may have.

The dialogue is extended to parents through a self-evaluation form which children complete for each subject identifying their successes and challenges. They bring these to the parents' consultation meeting, 15 minute long meetings are which are pupil-led. The pupils do most of the

talking with comments added by the teacher, the parents and the headteacher as appropriate.

Behaviour: bottom up or top down?

Good behaviour is largely a product of good collaborative relationships and a dialogic pedagogy. As such the regulation of behaviour is not separate to the business of learning and integral to creating conditions which allow learning to take place. At the same time there is a more behaviourist 'top down' approach with explicit rules and a system of awarding points for desirable behaviour. This leads to two sets of rules and incentives. One set is proposed discussed and moderated within Circle Time meetings while award of points is more strictly behaviourist in that these are awarded only by teachers. 'Circle points' are so called because although they are earned by individual pupils, they are then counted as points to the particular Circle group the individual belongs to. At the end of each term the Circle group with the most points will be awarded a prize such as a half day trip.

Ultimately, however, the reality of pupil influence is tested by their routine behaviour and ability for self regulation and articulation of acceptable codes of conduct.

> *I came from a structured school where I did all the talking and every child was sitting in their seat, perfectly silent. I find that here, working with the children … they are so much more responsible for themselves ... if they do something you think isn't quite right, you can say to them 'how do you feel about that?' and they are really good at saying that it was a really silly thing to do and giving reasons why they did it and why it isn't a good idea … whereas, at my last school, you would ask why did you do that and they would just shrug their shoulders and wouldn't be able to give you an answer.*
>
> (Year 5 teacher)

The weight of pupil influence

There is strong evidence that pupils have a great deal of influence regarding the process of their learning and the context within which they learn. Younger children may not be aware of this because it is simply their everyday experience of school but those who have experienced a different environment are acutely aware of it. It is so embedded within the school ethos that teachers comment that they wouldn't know how to manage without the children's input. 'When we make decisions, says a Year 3 teacher, we would be thinking – what would they think about it and whenever we think that, we just ask them'.

The nature and quality of participation, the weight of pupil influence is, in large part, explained by the quality of leadership, the creation of a democratic structures and a conversational culture in which talking and listening are valued irrespective of the status of the participants. School improvement is linked directly to a participative ethos which infuses curriculum and assessment and allows for flexibility and continuous feedback loops in learning and teaching. Pupils are brought into the heart of curriculum planning, not 'delivered' by teachers but constructed in partnerships. Pupil responsibility is further exercised through self and peer assessment.

There are naturally tensions which in a learning community are recognised and addressed. Formal consultation and informal participation have to be congruent while rules and incentives and sanctions framed by pupils have to sit comfortably with strictures devised and administered by staff. Learning without limits remains at the epicentre of the school's philosophy – an approach to school life which is constantly challenging and pushing at the boundaries of the possible.

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Case summary B

Cultivating Conversations: The Deanes School

The school context

This secondary school is an average-sized 11-16 comprehensive school with a little over 1000 students on roll. It is located in a relatively affluent area in Essex. Approximately half the pupils live in the local catchment area. Others come from further afield including many from areas where there is selective education. Pupils come from a very wide range of social and economic backgrounds. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds but the school's proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is higher than the national average. The school has been designated as a specialist school with Sports College status since 1998. There are a number of school programmes that support the development of student influence and participation at The Deanes School. For example, student leadership is cultivated through the Junior Sports Leaders Scheme and the Student Council has been in place for approximately seven years. Embedding

practices of student consultation and students-as-researchers however is an ongoing process. School leaders are keenly aware of the challenges involved in encouraging more inclusive participation among both students and staff in student voice initiatives.

There is an established history of promoting student voice at the Deanes School. 'Student voice goes back deep into the ethos of the school' says the Assistant Head. Initiatives centred on student voice, research and leadership include:

- The Learning Mentoring Programme, established ten years ago, providing students with regular opportunities to discuss their progress, target-setting and a focus for further development with their teachers. These conversations have expanded and now include parents at Review Days, 'a dialogue that's embedded in the school'.

- The Junior Sports Leaders scheme, a structured programme that leads to a nationally recognised leadership accreditation. This scheme is relevant to the school's Sports College status, and cultivates student leadership.

- The Student Council which has been in place for approximately seven years.

- A 'Students as Researchers' programme initiated three years ago by a former teacher following her completion of a Masters degree at the Open University.

While a Student Council has been in place for seven years its forms and functions continue to evolve. Currently eight tutor groups in each Year Group send two reps each to their respective Year Councils covering Years 7-10. Two reps are chosen from the 16 members of each of the four Year Councils to become members of the eight-member Student Council. Each council meets once every half term. The Year Councils are followed one week later by the Student Council, a sequencing which allows the agenda of the Student Council to be shaped by ideas and proposals from the Year Councils. The Head Boy (Steven) and the Head Girl (Carrie) co-chair the School Council and set the agenda for its meetings. Following each meeting of the School Council, a Student Voice Newsletter is produced to communicate ideas and decisions reached at School Council to students in their tutor groups. Responses to the newsletters are then discussed by Year Group reps and discussed at both Year Council and Student Council.

While these initiatives are now well embedded in school routines, senior leaders and students are not complacent. For example, the shared perception by students and senior leaders that the consultative system is both hierarchical and cumbersome prompted the introduction of sub-committees

comprised of three or four Student Council members working with students not represented on the Councils so as to develop ideas relevant to specific aspects of school life. These conversations are informed both by informal consultation and student-led research. A member of the senior leadership team, or a budget holder with responsibility for the area of particular interest to the sub-committee, joins the sub-committee who can be an ambassador for their voice and who, in the words of the assistant head, 'has the clout in school to actually follow through with their suggestions'.

The Assistant Head plans to formally align the activities of the student sub-committees with the work of the Governing Body sub-committees thus opening up the possibility of a widening of student influence on decisions taken at meetings of the Governing Body. The introduction of sub-committees creates new possibilities for direct communication among nominated students, senior leaders and governors with specific responsibility for particular areas of school life. Just as connections between the School Council, Year Council and Tutor Groups grew out of an appreciation of the importance of widening student participation in school decision-making, so the sub-committees are a key plank in the school's strategy of fostering greater collaboration between members of the Student Council and (a) staff in general and (b) the wider student body.

This re-alignment is both symbolic and significant in creating new channels of communication, sources of influence and opportunities for disparate voices to be heard and acted upon. There is a keen recognition within the Senior Leadership Team that challenges remain. There is always a temptation to put a gloss on what the school is doing and what has been achieved, whereas recognising the inherent tensions in school life is a hallmark of effective leadership and a measure of an improving school. 'Students haven't quite realised that they have the opportunity to speak' says the Head Boy, while at the same time acknowledging that 'opportunity' is not equivalent to grasping the opportunity. As senior leaders point out there is a historical and social dimension to the 'unconsulted majority' for whom trust in the school's willingness to genuinely tune in to their concerns can take a long time to build.

Consultation with influence

The Deputy Head speaks of the frustration that arises when students are consulted but no change follows and no visible action ensues.

> *It's no good saying, 'Thank you very much. You think lessons at this school are rubbish do you? Thanks for that', and then that's the end of it. There has to be something that follows it.*

It is therefore crucial, she says, for discussion to centre on things that students can have influence over, that they are aware of what those things

are, and that there is tangible follow up to consultation. This edges the school away from the more comfortable but rather general espousal of voice towards a more uncomfortable and context-specific questioning of some of the fundamental bases and rationale of school life and learning.

The Assistant Head aims to establish clearer synergies between, on the one hand the formal structures of student participation and, on the other, the formal decision-making structures of teachers and school governors. He also wants to build the 'conversational' culture within the school by promoting more informal opportunities for dialogue between teachers and students in which views and preferences can be explored in a friendly face-to-face environment.

At the moment such informal conversational opportunities tend to arise in the context of classroom lessons but depend on how much influence the teacher has and what subject they teach, as the Deputy Head explains:

> *For example, I find it useful to be able to hook sociological concepts back into the school - questions of power and authority and hierarchies. Other students in other subjects might have the same opportunities to debate but not the same opportunities to influence. The teachers they're talking to may not have the potential to influence.*

Formal and informal consultation: resolving the tension

There are inevitable tensions between the formal and informal systems of influence and participation. The Deputy Head refers to a 'hierarchical' and a 'whimsical' model when describing decision-making and policy development at the school. While 'whimsy' may do an injustice to the informal processes through which new policies and practices emerge, policies that develop through informal conversations may, nonetheless, be inconsistent with policies developed through the formal structures of committees. Line managers may, as a result, be unsettled when they feel bypassed by such informal processes.

There is within the Senior Leadership Team an acute awareness of the status and sensitivities of staff and the inherent dangers in privileging student voice over that of teachers. Resistance by some members of staff has to be understood when consultation and decision making are perceived as moving too fast and too far and into domains that have traditionally lain within the teachers' discretion. The staff survey revealed that while teachers are generally in favour of consultation over wider school matters and in relation to issues such as student behaviour, there was a markedly less positive

response to the questionnaire item 'Pupils have opportunities to influence decisions about classroom teaching and learning'[2].

Who speaks and who listens, whose voices count and whose opinions are listened to tend to be academically successful, articulate students who have developed positive relationships with their teachers and whose views speak most clearly to the prevailing agenda for school improvement. While this is not surprising, it is seen as unacceptable within a school ethos committed to inclusion.

> *I'd say the students who have the most valid points are listened to. If they have a voice about issues that the teachers are interested in themselves then their voice will be heard over others*
>
> (Deputy Head)

Facing these issues, as they apply to teachers as well as to students, is a challenge that senior leaders are determined not to shirk. However valuable the Students as Researchers Project, it had to be acknowledged that it was widely seen as the province of 20 select students. However important the Sports Leaders initiative the scope of these students for genuine leadership needed to be revisited and recast. While reluctance to embrace student voice on the part of some staff had to be understood, the potential of students to enhance the quality of learning and teaching needed to be made evident. As the Head Girl put it:

> *Well, they [students] know more than teachers think we do about how to learn and stuff like that. So we actually know a little bit more than we are actually able to express.*

Given a commitment to embedding student voice more centrally and powerfully within the day-to-day conduct of school life, the GTC Project was greeted with enthusiasm by senior staff. Groups of senior leaders and students from Deanes School participated together in workshops in which they worked together, planning and developing coordinated strategies for enhancing student influence and participation in policy development and decision-making.

Opportunities for teacher-student collaboration from the GTC project

During the course of the GTC project 'the kids and the staff showed a good degree of honesty about where they lie in the decision-making', said the Assistant Head, adding:

[2] There are 71 full time teachers at the Deanes School. 32 teachers completed questionnaires: nine teachers with little or no leadership responsibility, 20 middle leaders, two senior leaders and the head teacher.

> *It has prompted reflection, conversations and a widening of representation. It made it more concrete - the need to widen representation*

It was very clear from these students' accounts that they had felt empowered by the research and through opportunities to participate with students and teachers from other schools through the regional conferences. One of the immediate outcomes was for participating students to develop a research approach that combined questionnaires and interviews focused on independent learning, how students learned best, what teachers did to help them to learn and the degree to which they felt they had a choice about how they learned. Having presented their findings to other schools at the follow up conference, the next step was to refine their findings and present them to the whole staff of Deanes School and then, at a later date, to the Governing Body. The juxtaposition of experience and opinion was highlighted by the Deputy Head, arguing that experience is insufficient without the benefit of opinion.

> *The teachers have the experience and the students have the opinion. And it's the students' opinion, in my opinion really, that counts the most. Because we are the ones that are learning. It is our futures that are at stake with what we do at this school*

Sharing a common space

The views expressed by the Deputy and Assistant Heads illustrate the perceptive concerns of senior leaders with a deep knowledge of their school, its history and the characteristics and commitments of its staff. They are keenly aware of the intelligence of their students, including the intelligence of the 'unconsulted majority'. They share an understandable anxiety about the school's capacity to respond adequately to views that may not sit comfortably within the broad consensus and espoused values of the staff. At the same time they realise that not to honour the promise of inclusion would be a breach of trust and place at risk a fragile relationship from the outset.

The more we explore with schools the difficulties and constraints they face in developing student consultation, the more we begin to understand that a key condition for genuinely inclusive consultation is the recognition by all staff and students that no single school can meet the wide variety of children's needs, yet it can become a place in which all members share a common space without fear of their views being tamed within a constricting school frame of reference.

Case summary C

Giving voice and having choice: Carpenters Primary School

The school context

Carpenters is a large inner city primary school and nursery in Newham, site of the 2012 Olympics and ranked as the lowest of London Boroughs (together with Tower Hamlets) on the 50 quality of life indicators and is claimed to be have one of the highest crime rates in London. It serves an area of high social deprivation with half of its pupil population eligible for free school meals and 71 per cent with English as an additional; language. 120 pupils have refugee status. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being of Black African origin. A very high percentage of pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is broadly average.

The ethos of Carpenters is one which strives to ensure that children will become well-rounded young people, characterised by creativity, curiosity and empowered to make contributions through good communication skills. The Deputy Head stresses the importance of trusting children to be mature and understanding. A class teacher comments that there is an unwritten ethos in which staff help each other out and that it gradually extends to children being consulted too and becoming part of the collaborative ethos.

Together with a growing process of informal consultation, a more formal commitment to pupil participation is longstanding and is continuously developing as staff discover new ways of giving pupils a voice and a role in school improvement.

- The School Council was established seven years ago. In September pupils nominate a representative for the whole year who then has to prepare a speech as to why he or she would represent them well.

- There is a pupil suggestion box for how the school could spend money.

- Questionnaires are completed by pupils in Years 3 to 5 on aspects of school provision. A similar one is completed by governors.

- The Raising Achievement Plan is reviewed every half term The RAP form comes from teachers but asks pupils ‘what do you think we could do about this issue?

- Peer mediation is in its second year. 18 Y5 pupils take it in turns at playtime to support and befriend younger children. Pupils may take the initiative to go to the 'the cool room' when they feel they are getting upset or angry.

- Pupils are consulted about behaviour guidelines, bullying, class rules and appropriate rewards and sanctions.

- A Friday Journal in the Nursery is used for children to give feedback on what they have enjoyed

A forum for consultation: the School Council

The School Council is seen as the main forum through which staff can gain insights into issues from pupils' perspectives. The Council meets once a week with a pupil chairing the meeting and council members voting on ideas and projects. These are then presented to the headteacher. Ideas are also offered to the Council by means of a Suggestion Board while once every half term there is a class meeting which suggests items for class reps to take to the Council. Issues may also arise through Circle Time, another forum for pupils to talk about things that concern them and their peers. At the end of last year the School Council were given the responsibility for leading the school assembly.

A Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HTLA) acknowledges that good ideas take time to implement, that meeting once a week isn't adequate to really develop projects and that difficulties of continuity are compounded during the summer when numerous clubs are running and the numbers in attendance at meetings fluctuates from week to week. A class teacher also comments that there is a danger of the Council becoming too routine and tokenistic. It also requires training for the role which is not 'too heavy and theoretical' but is able to equip children for some of the quite demanding responsibilities they are expected to assume. For example, two Council reps were sent to a local authority meeting. Two of the quieter children were elected by their peers to go and represent their school but they should have had better preparation for a quite intimidating task with the consequence that the school's involvement was limited at this important meeting.

Highter Learning Teaching Assistants (H) play an important role in helping pupils to test ideas out on them, using the 5W questions as a structure for presenting their ideas - 'what, where, when, why, who?' Pairing of older and younger children within the Council also helps to develop confidence and communication skills.

Children as innovators

Trusting children's ability to come up with innovative ideas and organise activities is repaid in the skills they acquire and the confidence they bring to the task when entrusted with responsibility. The initiative for a school newspaper came from a Year 6 class in which children took responsibility for organising the content and stories. A Year 5 class teacher commented on the skills children developed through organising a sport event.

> *The Y5s were really good at organising sports morning. Children respond when you've given them responsibility.*
>
> (Class teacher)

The school have run a range of projects where children have made very positive contributions to the life of their local community including working with designers on the development of their local area in the lead up to the 2012 Olympics. Teachers recognise, however, that many of these consultations have primarily been adult-led and that there is greater scope for pupils to take the lead and pursue ideas that are their own. As the Deputy Head comments:

> *We are learning that what we think children need doesn't always square with what children think.*

Teachers and HLTAs speak of ways in which children surprise them by their initiative and creativity, expressed both in wider school matters and in the flow of classroom activities.

> *The pupils are so much more capable than teachers and adults think. You have to make a decision to 'pull back on task' or follow their interest as long as the learning objective is still in sight.*

Willingness to be surprised, to stand back and allow children more space for initiative and expression of ideas creates a virtuous circle in which responsibility can be extended into other areas. So among the range of policies to which children can have a genuine contribution is the marking policy. As the school wanted to make marking both more child-friendly and formative, they asked the children what they would find helpful, so that, in the words of the deputy Head 'Children agree how we mark and what we mark and we want them to come up with a pupil statement for the policy'.

Recently, in response to pupils' ideas and the feedback from Ofsted the school has revised its assessment procedures giving greater emphasis to peer marking with emphasis on giving positive feedback, involving children in monitoring the impact of the new approach to assessment. One of the lead teachers spoke of assessment for learning as '*giving voice and having choice but in a more controlled way*'.

Improving learning through feedback on teaching

Children are encouraged to give feedback on their learning, what they have enjoyed, what works well or less well, and on teaching that suits their learning 'styles' or preferences. Techniques such as mind mapping are used to connect proposed learning with what children know now and can do. In target setting for themselves children pick a *'must, could and should'* and having reached a target are asked to consider '*how you could improve it'*.

While teachers choose the topics for lessons they employ topic webs which start with questions such as 'what do you know about?' What would you like to learn about? What resources and ideas can you think of? What do you think would help? What did you find hard and what can we do to make it easier?

> *When we plan lessons we think of EPIC – Enjoyment, Pace, Involvement and inclusion and Challenge*
>
> (Class teacher)

Philosophy for Kids (P4K) is a strand they want to build in to the curriculum.

Living with and managing tensions

However successful in growing participation and breaking new ground teachers speak of the tension in wanting to act in line with their values but needing to follow government guidelines that at times constrain what they would like to do. The feeling is as though they have little control over the direction they would ideally like to take. A tension expresses itself in the desire among staff to give pupils more responsibility while at the same time trying to ensure high SATs. Achieving the latter will, as they see it, allow them the freedom to continue to pursue their participation agenda. The 'Catch 22' is that failure to concentrate on test preparation means that they will be hit with further government initiatives so restricting any further risk taking. An HLTA comments:

> *It feels like you are teaching the children to save the school from suffering because the results suffer.*

The GTC Project

The children from Carpenters came to the regional project conference with a well developed awareness of learning and teaching strategies and with confidence to express their views in a mature and informed way. As the lead teacher remarked 'It made me more confident about working with them as they are so clever already'.

At the conference pupils were told about planning and presentation and how to use observation, interviewing and questionnaires in their research which, it was planned, would focus on behaviour for learning back in school. They chose pupils from Years 2, 4 and 6 to interview back at school in a quiet room where they would be free from interruption.

> *The children were more honest because the children were asking them….We had to make teachers feel comfortable with us being there.*
>
> (Pupil researcher)

On returning to the school children observed lessons in Years 1 and 5 watching for 'behaviour for learning' strategies and behaviour management, discussing their observations with teachers who welcomed what was generally affirming of their practice and never perceived as threatening.

> *The project brought assessment to the fore. It raised awareness – teachers talking to each other especially the lead teachers. How behaviour impacts learning - teachers leading and consulting pupils. Do the well behaved children perform better than those that don't? What can the teachers do when children are misbehaving? Due to the time of year we want to carry on in September and grow the party, the lead teachers and pupils and TAs from KS1 and KS2 and develop a bigger team of pupils to continue on the research. We need a bigger team to make a bigger impact to continue with the research.*
>
> (Lead teacher)

A continuing venture

Carpenters is a school that recognises the worth of consulting pupils and is venturing into ways of expanding this at all levels. There is a continuing challenge for a school with a wide diversity of needs in moving too far from the straight and narrow attainment agenda, constantly looking over their shoulder to maintain progression in SATs year or on year in spite of a constantly shifting and reconfiguring population. Yet this is a school and a staff which will not look back or relinquish their commitment to what they believe is right and has been shown to enhance the lives of children and of the professional lives of their teachers.

Case summary D

Watling View School, St Albans

The school context

Watling View is a special school for about 90 pupils aged two to nineteen years with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties. About a third of young people have autistic spectrum disorders. The school has a wide catchment area including St. Albans, Harpenden, Watford and Rickmansworth with a small number travelling from other parts of Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. The school provides an outreach service to a number of mainstream schools in Hertfordshire. It has 'Healthy Schools' status, a number of awards for ICT and 'Investors in People'. Its aims are to promote the personal and social development of pupils, enhance pupils self esteem, develop lively, imaginative, creative and enquiring minds, and develop the most appropriate communication skills for individual pupils and to enable pupils to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to contribute effectively within the home, school and wider community.

Challenge and care

Teaching in a school such as Watling View is bound to be challenging. Many pupils lack the basic capacities that are taken for granted in most mainstream schools. The pupils have a wide variety of disabilities, which hugely affect their ability to learn. Most are working below level 1 in the National Curriculum and are often heavily reliant on adults for many aspects of their learning and day to day care. For this reason there is a high ratio of staff to pupils (approximately 1:2) involving fourteen teachers and over forty teaching assistants. This was brought into sharp focus when the researcher was invited to interview a child who was the only child in her class who is successfully able to verbally communicate with unknown adults. Many of this child's classmates were wheelchair bound and many manifested challenging behaviours. Unsurprisingly, a great deal of energy and ingenuity is devoted to enabling so many children and young people with so many difficulties to cope with every day life. In 2005 Ofsted Inspectors found Watling View to be a good school, well led and managed with a steady but positive improvement trajectory. They had great praise for the staff's caring approach and its close collaboration with outside agencies.

> The school provides an outstanding level of care for its pupils. Staff show genuine warmth and sensitivity towards the pupils and they, in turn, have trusting relationships with adults. The support and guidance provided for children in the Foundation Stage and for many of the students at post-16 are outstanding. Arrangements for

> protecting pupils and ensuring their health and safety are good. The school works closely with outside agencies and with a team of speech and language, occupational and physiotherapists.
>
> (Ofsted, 2005)

Targets for learning

There is no doubt that a key dimension of the school's ethos is concerned with care but this is not to suggest however that the school is merely a place where children are 'looked after' or cared for rather than educated. There is a clear academic push and target setting is a key feature of practice within the school. This especially true for the Secondary aged students who are encouraged to set themselves targets every Monday morning. The discussion about target setting immediately throws up an issue in which the concept of care is in tension with the need to help pupils to develop their independence. Some teachers are very clear about the need to enable pupils to set their own targets rather than rely on their teachers' ability to predict the young person's need and to set direction for them. Staff try to ensure that the targets are not only SMART but meaningful to them in everyday life, for example, rather than a target such as 'to be able to match coins', it would be 'to be able to exchange money for a drink in a café'.

A teacher talked about how pupils have been able to manage the challenging behaviour of a fellow pupil:

> *In a group of students with severe learning difficulties - one of them had violent behaviour and if we had monitored it and told him about it we would have had a reaction – we had this situation where I asked the other students what did they think and they managed his behaviour and told this student about his behaviour and they were able to say things that I knew it wouldn't have been acceptable for me to say and this student took it because it was from his peers and it was so powerful.*
>
> (Teacher)

Opportunities are created for self-regulation by standing back and letting pupils make choices for themselves and express their own views. This is said to be a shared belief amongst the staff although it is not so easily put into practice when the difficulties that pupils face are so challenging.

For many of the pupils in this school a target may be focused on a small step towards acceptable social behaviour. For example, one boy was proud to be able to say that he had successfully carried a box while walking through the town with his teacher. Praise from members of staff and the obvious delight shown by the pupil at this achievement helps to build on and strengthen a sense of self efficacy. Teachers are aware that drawing pupils into a dialogue about their learning is the key to independence. When pupils are encouraged to set their Monday morning targets, they are being invited to

make a choice about the focus of their learning and later, when what has been achieved is reviewed, pupils are being drawn into self-assessment.

Pupil voice, pupil choice

In spite of the obvious obstacles to the pupils' self expression and ability to articulate their feelings, student voice and pupil consultation are both meaningful and rooted in daily practice. Addressing the issue of 'pupil voice' a school development team discussed how pupils were being consulted about what they wanted to see in their school. It led to a questioning of the degree to which teachers' organisation of everything for pupils reinforced passivity. Teachers were asked to consider the range of problems that pupils were exposed to and experiment with ways of extending the challenge. For example, one teacher changed the classroom routine so that pupils had to find their own equipment in a drawer set aside for them. While clearly challenging for pupils on the autistic spectrum, without raising expectations and 'pushing the envelope' it is difficult to discover just what pupils may be capable of. Discussions within the pupil voice development team led eventually to what became known as the 'Shout' day which was conceived as an awareness-raising event that would bring into sharp focus the need to leave space for pupils to make choices and to express their views about their learning.

The title 'Shout 08' signalled that the day would be an annual event. It included a wide variety of optional activities. Pupils are invited to choose the activities to participate in or just watch. Some activities are purely for fun and entertainment, whilst others are designed to present pupils with choices to make as part of the activity. Activities include 'Circus acts'; 'Musical performances'; 'Having a haircut'; 'Going for a bus ride'; 'Making crafts'; 'Cooking'; 'Eating cakes' and many more.

The school's own statement about the day on its website includes:

> Whilst it is important that the voices of all children can be heard, it is particularly so for many children, where they literally do not have a voice. Shout will focus on each young person's differing abilities and methods of communication, as well as hearing the message.

> Students
> Use your voice today. Today especially the focus will be on what you want to say. You can make choices, have your say, tell us what you like and don't like.

> Staff
> Today is an opportunity to listen to the voice of our young people. See what choices they make, how they make their voice heard and how they feel about they day.

> Parents and Carers
> Help us to make this an exciting and worthwhile day. Let our students make choices from the start of the day. It is a non-uniform day, so they can choose what they want to wear. When they finish the day listen to their voice, hear what they have to say about the experience, and please let us know how it went.

With the co-operation of the school cook, lunch was served as a buffet. This was a key strategy that enabled pupils to express their preferences.

For pupils in this school making a choice and giving voice to their ideas and feelings is a new venture. Inviting pupils who have been at the school since the age of two to express a choice is very challenging but important in helping them acquire the skills of choice making. Enabling the pupils to move around the school was also very challenging because of the security system and because of their need for assistance. For many pupils the way in which they exercised choice was simply to leave the room. Sometimes they made choices that seemed bizarre – one boy simply repeated the experience of having his haircut for the whole day.

One issue that surfaced during the Shout day focused on the role of Teaching Assistants. There was a tendency for TAs to try and guide the pupils in their choices rather than make space for them to choose for themselves. Actions such as these could, however, thwart attempts to develop a consistent approach to choice making and self determination and was seen by some of the staff as a priority for dialogue and professional development.

> *I feel that often the TAs have such strong relationships with our pupils that they want them to succeed in everything and find it difficult to allow them to make mistakes and hence fail. Yet do we not learn from our mistakes?*
>
> (Teacher)

The girl who was the only child in her class able to verbally communicate with unknown adults said that she liked having the chance to 'boss the teachers around'. She asked the researcher if she could have a visit from a policeman or an ambulance driver next time. Her difficulty in understanding the distinction between a visiting researcher and the teacher responsible for Shout day raises an issue as to how pupils' influence on what happens within the classroom or the school may need to be nurtured and extended. This is one of the important things to learn about having influence: to whom do you need to express your views?

The day is seen by senior staff as being a learning experience in which teachers could deliberately stand back and learn about their pupils and about the choices that pupils would make if they had the space to do that. Members of staff were encouraged to avoid exercising control more than was absolutely necessary and if a pupil were to get up and dance or to let out a yell either of delight or outrage, this should be accepted as an expression of the pupil's viewpoint. At the end of the day members of staff were asked what they had learnt. Teachers had spent more time than is

usual in observation mode and had been able to see how particular activities had a positive impact on particular pupils. The process had involved a great deal of reinterpretation of pupils' reactions to every day activities.

Learning to choose

A significant challenge for teachers in this school is teaching pupils how to make a choice. Some of these young people have been part of this very caring environment since they were two years old and so have not learnt, like their counterparts in mainstream schools, how to make a choice. The school works hard at creating opportunities to make choices but they tend to be restricted to such things as black paint or blue paint. The challenge is recognised by teachers as illustrated by the following comment:

> *…our challenge is making choice meaningful and not tokenistic. For example, I have witnessed TAs inadvertently lead pupils to select the correct symbol by indicating the correct one with their body language and voice, when it is not appropriate to do so i.e. during an assessment.*
>
> (Teacher)

An opportunity for choice is also provided to help young people manage their behaviour. For example, a teacher reported that when a boy in her class started to become unsettled he was immediately offered a choice of 'calming' activities to prevent his behaviour escalating. The teacher expressed the hope that the pupil will learn to make the 'right' choices concerning his behaviour and take ownership of it.

As this case study powerfully illustrates, the notion of pupil participation takes on a new meaning and assumes new dimensions in a school where the taken-for-granted channels of communication are denied to children and young people. The basic human capacity of making a choice is something to be explicitly taught. More influential than direct teaching however, it means creating an environment in which children are able to venture beyond the usual classroom conventions, for example by simply leaving the room of their own volition. These are unusual and challenging behaviours for risk averse Teaching Assistants, teachers and senior leaders and may upset parents who themselves reinforce dependent behaviour in the home and community setting. A visitor to the school might be shocked to witness the 'unruly' behaviour on occasions such as Shout Day but it is only by breaking through many of the traditional school conventions that participation and voice in a school such as Watling View may be realised. The longer term challenge is to embed what has been learned from a single day event into the ongoing day-today practice of the school.

Other schools visited

Heybridge Pupil Referral Unit

This PRU in Essex caters for over 250 young people who are currently not accessing mainstream schooling for a wide range of reasons including behavioural difficulties or school refusal. The aim of the unit is to re-engage these children with learning.

Prescot Primary School

This large primary school is located in Knowsley on Merseyside has been categorised as 'outstanding' by Ofsted. It serves over 400 pupils from a wide area around Prescot in which there is an above average number of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. It has a reputation for the provision of foreign language learning.

Prescot School

This is a small secondary school in a disadvantaged area of Knowsley. Prescot School currently serves approximately 920 pupils aged from 11 to 16, boys and girls. The school became a Specialist Language College in 2000 offering French, German, Spanish, Portuguese and most recently Mandarin Chinese to students. The key priority for the school is to raise the aspirations of students and their parents.

The Nobel School

The Nobel School is an 11-18 secondary school in Stevenage, Hertfordshire. It has been awarded specialist status for 'Training School' 'Performing Arts' and 'Science'. The school was not visited for the purposes of a case study but the research team learned a great deal from limited investigation of practice in this school.

Lister Community School

This is an 11-18 secondary school in the London Borough of Newham. The school was not visited for the purposes of a case study but the research team learned a great deal from limited investigation of practice in this school.

Francis Bacon Maths and Computing College

This is an 11-18 secondary in St Albans, Hertfordshire. It has a multi-cultural student body and special 'Maths and Computing College' status. The school was not visited for the purposes of a case study but teachers and pupils were fully involved in the project and the pupils from the school's Students as Researchers' group made an impressive presentation at a national conference during the life of the project. The research team learned a great deal from its limited investigation of practice in this school.

Appendix 2

Pupils' research

This appendix describes the outcomes of the research projects devised and led by pupils themselves with the support of their teachers. The account below is organised in themes: assessment, behaviour for learning, curriculum, pupil influence and learning and teaching.

Assessment

There were three projects focusing on 'Teacher feedback' and one focusing on 'consultation about progress'. These projects indicated that pupils value teacher feedback in a variety of forms and find it especially helpful when it shows them clearly how to improve. However not all comments are instructive and feedback is not always given consistently across all subjects. Some pupils valued the opportunity to mark their own and other's work while some found paired assessment the least helpful assessment strategy. In one primary school only a fifth of the children thought they knew how well they were doing in their school work. Two Year 5 researchers found it surprising that 17% of the 90 pupils they surveyed were not consulted about setting their future goals and targets therefore they questioned how they could achieve them.

Behaviour for learning

There were three projects focusing on 'Behaviour for learning' and one project on each of the following: 'Concentration', 'Rewards', 'Affects on behaviour', 'Activities and behaviours' and 'Affects of behaviour'.

At primary level this area showed pupils benefiting from a range of teaching strategies and environmental resources that supported their 'good' behaviour. However 'good' behaviour was defined as much by 'sitting cross-legged on the carpet with hands up' as by children helping each other and being in charge of their own learning. In one case pupils were asked if they ever acted aggressively or made eye contact with teachers.

At secondary level pupil research teams concluded that in one school good reward systems motivate pupils to work harder but they must be consistently applied. An observation was also made that pupils were not being consulted about the school code of conduct. In another school the opposite regarding rewards was the case with three quarters of the 100 or so pupils surveyed perceiving the consequence system was used far more than the reward system, with pupils in lower sets getting more commendations

from teachers. There was also a perception in this school that pupils should only receive rewards for outstanding work, not for behaving well which is what they felt they should be doing anyway.

Pupils observed that reward systems work best in tandem with enjoyable lessons that allow pupils to exercise choice and draw on a variety of interactive teaching approaches and resources. In one secondary school it was perceived by most pupils surveyed that boredom in lessons, their own laziness, the difficulty of work and consumption of food all had an effect on behaviour as did the behaviour system which the majority of pupils surveyed thought should be changed.

Curriculum

There were two projects focusing on 'Homework', two on 'Pupil choice', one on 'Literacy across the curriculum' and one on 'PE'.

In the three schools looking at pupil choice in the curriculum, pupils in the primary schools generally had more opportunity to choose elements of what and how they wanted to learn in a given topic. In the secondary school Y7 pupils experienced more choice in this area. Pupils in both phases were asked about their prior learning at the start of a topic although this was not experienced consistently across schools or subjects.

In a further two secondary schools in the same region pupil researchers had concerns about their schools' homework policies and practice. Teachers and pupils from primary and secondary schools at the second conference found the insights from each other's projects helpful in thinking about their own situations with regard to homework. One school found that of the 79 pupils they surveyed pupils appeared to be receiving the right level of challenge in their homework. They considered this a positive outcome however they raised concerns about pupils not feeling they could ask teachers for help, receiving most help from parents at home. Other issues were that pupils did not know when they would receive homework so found it hard to organise their time and do their best. In addition pupils in higher sets found they received too much homework at times which they found stressful while the lower sets thought they should not receive homework but receive more help from teachers. In general pupils thought they received too much homework. The other school's outcomes mirrored these findings with regard to parental help but also found that many pupils had received detentions for not completing and handing in homework on time. Although there was a homework club it was only on a Wednesday and homework could be required to be handed in on a Tuesday after receiving it on a Monday. More room in homework planners was seen as an issue plus the need to make homework relevant and enjoyable.

One secondary school investigated how literacy was carried out across the curriculum and found that most of the time there are supportive literacy displays and words in classrooms, that pupils can take on a range of roles in discussions, are good at working together with teachers providing clear rules for talking as part of their learning. However pupils perceived teachers rarely showed pupils examples of how to talk and listen as well as pupils being able to practice listening and taking notes.

One primary school was concerned that pupils may undervalue PE because they were always forgetting their PE kits. Although their research was unfinished at the time of the second conference the pupils planned to survey pupils in KS1 and 2 to find out if they had ever forgotten their kit and knew the advantages of PE.

Pupil influence

There were five projects focusing on 'Pupil voice in school' and one on 'The School Council'.

Teachers at one special school were concerned that pupils at their school were not being allowed by staff to exercise as much choice as they could. The teachers organised a 'Shout Day' where pupils could choose what clothes they wanted to wear to school, what to eat from a buffet selection, what activities to do, where to walk and how long to spend on activities. Pupils were able to take part in circus skills, cooking, beauty sessions, listening to bands, parachute games and catching the public bus. The two pupil researchers told their conference group that they had enjoyed spending lots of time in the male and female beauty rooms. The teachers spoke of how hard it was for many staff to 'stand back' as the day appeared chaotic, especially to TAs, and they were used to providing intensive one-to-one care and ensuring pupils were normally in the right places at the right time and completing tasks or making responses yet on this occasion they need to let pupils follow their own choices.

One secondary school wanted to investigate the kinds of pupil voice opportunities taking place in their school; they producing a DVD where 18 pupils spoke about their work. There was clearly a history of pupil participation and consultation at the school which students appreciated and enabled them to contribute effectively to initiatives when needed.

> *We also have a very good relationship with the HT, Mr C., and he just listens to our views cos they're going to change the school very soon with 'Schools for the Future'. We've looked at the blueprints and we've kind of looked at the architectural plans to see if we like it and we've kind of commented upon it and said 'This bits a bit iffy can you'…*

> *Especially cos we're science students we tried to have a big point about the style of classrooms because a classroom can be set in a certain different way and obviously you need gas taps and fume cupboards but there can be various ways that they can all be put together to enhance learning and things like that and we're trying to work with Mr C. to improve it and make sure it's good once it gets rebuilt.*
>
> (Two male senior students)

Other opportunities that pupils across the year groups spoke about included getting involved in School Council, the local Youth Council, classroom observations, observing the teaching of staff who had requested this, school improvement surveys, informal feedback on teaching requested by teachers, and peer mentoring and support.

Pupil researchers in one primary school wanted to find out if children have a voice in their school. They found that most children are confident to speak in class but they need to find ways to help the others, that confident children speak up and that if you speak up you do better in school. Most pupils perceived that teachers give them opportunity to talk about their work, what and how they want to learn but not all the time. Most pupils also considered that teachers wanted to listen to them and wanted pupils to give them ideas.

This same topic of interest was taken up by pupils in an exclusion unit. Pupils mainly reported getting between a lot of say to a little say in their assessment, behaviour and learning. Few pupils reported getting no say. They mainly wanted to have a lot or quite a bit of say in these domains with almost no pupils wanting a little or none. Interestingly, some of the pupils who reported getting no say were happy with this. The outcomes of the pupils' research suggests that participation at the unit may be determined by the individual characteristics of pupils and by the types of relationships they are able and willing to have with their teachers.

The effectiveness of the school council was of concern to the pupil research team at one secondary school. They found out that two thirds of pupils did not know who was on the council and felt that teachers influenced its work too much, that the majority of pupils felt ignored by the council and in general that it was just 'for show'. To address these issues pupils suggested improved communication, more regular meetings than once a month and a budget.

Learning and teaching

There were two projects focusing on 'Learning styles', one on 'Pupil choice' and one on 'The effect of out-of school learning on in-school learning.'

Pupil researchers at one primary school found that all children enjoyed having a say in school and that most children like a 'teacher and child' approach to making decisions about learning and activities. They also found out that teachers believe it is important for children to have a say in what they are learning and how they will learn new skills. The most successful methods of letting pupils have a say at their school are the following: Circle Time, Wroxham Time, Learning Partners and Choice of Level of Work which have been introduced elsewhere in this report along with the outcomes of the research undertaken by teachers into pupil participation at this and two other schools in the region.

Exploring the possible effect on in-school learning from taking part in out-of-school learning was explored by a team of three Year 5 researchers who although had not completed their research at the time of the second conference were already discovering that playing snooker with parents helped their skills in maths.

The opportunity to choose which 'learning styles' suit pupils was the focus of one secondary research team who found that pupils did not know enough about independent learning in general although they generally knew their 'learning style' (loosely based on Gardner's categories) and wanted scope to exercise more choice in their learning. Although the team were drawn from Year 10 students their ability to articulate the broader issues underpinning their research using examples from their work was outstanding and very helpful to their own teachers and others at their second conference.

> *One thought we did have was in the way of teaching of different learning styles. I think Year 7 would probably be the best time for them to decide what's best for them because then they've got that basis …so … in science they're researching one topic they might say 'In this topic I'd like you to try researching this on the Internet or try researching it in a book so that they get those different styles first of all and then maybe just throughout the years just keep reminding them of those different learning styles so they keep trying them out instead of forcing them to say choose one and stick to it. Keep reminding them.*
>
> (Secondary pupil)

Appendix 3

Tools for supporting pupil influence and participation

Instruments, techniques and workshop activities

This appendix describes a set of tools that have been generated through the IPiL project. They were needed as tools for a discursive enquiry but can be adapted for use by practitioners and pupils who may want to take this discourse further in the future.

These tools can be broadly divided into tools for data gathering, tools for supporting dialogue and tools for training pupils as researchers. It is envisaged that these tools can be made available to practitioners and young people together with guidance that will enable them to adapt them to support the development of participation and influence in the future.

A. Tools for data gathering

These tools can be used to enable schools to carry out a self-evaluation exercise.

Pupil questionnaire

This instrument can be used with pupils in primary and secondary schools. It can also be used in special schools but pupils may need support to make their response. The questionnaire is headed 'Having a say' and explores the way pupils are listened to, consulted and provided with opportunities to influence their learning. The design of the instrument is two sided, that is to say that a single statement, e.g.: *Teachers ask me about where I like to learn in lessons* has a column of tick boxes to the left and right of the statement allowing the respondent to comment on a) the extent to which the practice occurs in school and b) the extent to which he or she values this practice on the other.

Staff questionnaire

This instrument can be used with teachers and support staff in primary, secondary and special schools. The questionnaire is divided into sections headed: My classroom practice, School conditions and Pupils' influence. The design of the instrument is two sided, that is to say that a single statement, e.g.: *Pupils contribute ideas about the content of what they are expected to learn* has a column of tick boxes to the left and right of the statement allowing the respondent to comment on a) the extent to which the practice occurs in school and b) the extent to which he or she values this practice on the other.

B. Tools for supporting dialogue

These tools are largely discussion activities or workshop activities designed to help pupils and / or teachers explore ways in which pupils can participate and extend their influence.

Practices for participation and influence

This is a card based discussion activity designed to enable teachers to discuss a wide range of professional practices that may contribute to pupils' participation in the learning process and to be more influential. Staff are divided into groups of between 4 and 6 and asked to work with a pack of 20 cards. Each card contains a statement such as pupils / students are involved in assessing other pupils' work. Workshop participants are asked to choose their own method of discussion, for example it might be to choose the 5 most important practices or to create a pattern indicating the relative importance of the statements. Feedback from the groups can help to establish development priorities or to identify issues for further debate or exploration.

How can we support each other?

This activity aims to facilitate a shared understanding of the personal expectations, hopes and fears of participants at the outset of a project. It helps group members from different schools get to know each other and involves students, teachers and other adults. The room is set out in café style with students sitting together in small groups of around four people while adults work together in their own small groups. Grouping participants together with others in a similar role enables group members to identify with each other and feel more secure about sharing their thoughts. Each group is given three flip-chart sheets with the following headings written on them: 'How can we support each other?', 'Hopes' and 'Challenges'. Everyone is asked to write down their thoughts on the sheet. The facilitator compiles a flip-chart sheet of shared responses which helps set the expectations of mutual support for the day.

The 'What Helps us learn?' workshop

In order to develop a more participative approach to learning, pupils and teachers need to reflect together on the nature of learning itself, the conditions for learning and behaviour for learning. The activity could be used in the context of a conference involving a number of schools or within a single school. It is best if the room layout is café style. Children from the same school work in pairs whilst the adults from the same school also work in pairs. The pairs are given a set of photo sheets each of which has a photograph of pupils in a learning situation and is accompanied by a set of questions such as: 'Do these people look as though they are learning?' and 'What is the teacher doing to help the young people to learn?'. Pupils and teachers are asked to discuss each question and make a note in the space provided. At the end of the discussion the workshop leader asks pupils to feed back ideas about the conditions that favour learning. These are

recorded on a flip chart. These comments can subsequently be typed up and used to take the discussion to a further stage.

Degrees of influence

In this activity students and staff from the same school work together in small groups to discuss influence in decision-making and set their own criteria for engaging in positive discussions. The discussion centres on photographs of pupils and adults in learning situations and cards with words on that describe varying degrees of influence e.g. children in charge, adults in charge, tokenism etc. The groups place these cards on the table and take one photo at a time and discuss together which card the photo should be placed under. There are no right or wrong answers and the photographs and cards prompt rich discussions about learning situations and influence which can be continued back in school. The activity concludes with a group self-assessment exercise reviewing how they managed the discussion, and the nature of members' influence within the group. Again this can be used back in school to consider how they can develop their relationship further.

Who is listening?

There can be a number of activities that take place in school where adults and children would say students are consulted and have influence. This activity enables groups of students and teachers from the same school to identify examples within their school and to discuss these from one another's perspectives. Such examples may include school council meetings, target-setting reviews or marking of work. A large flip-chart sheet is given to each group of four participants (two students working in pairs and two adults working in pairs at the same table) who write their contributions on post-it notes and attach them to the sheet. Each example is described under the headings of 'What happens?' 'Who talks?' 'Who listens?' and 'What happens next?' Discussion then takes place in each group as they share their thoughts and perspectives about each others' examples and how these could be developed in future.

What do we want to learn?

This activity provides an opportunity for groups of children and adults from the same school to share with each other and discuss what motivates them to learn inside and out of school. It also requires them to think about what they would like to learn in future. Each group writes down on post-it notes the activities they currently do in and out of school under headings written on large sheets of paper. These headings are 'What do you enjoy learning? and 'What do you want to learn in future?' The groups then add additional post-it notes to the sheets explaining why they think they could not, or would not want to, engage in this activity in school. The discussion surrounding this activity enables participants to engage with each other as learners outside of their school 'roles' and to explore the opportunities for, and constraints on, learning within a range of settings.

C. Tools for training pupils as researchers

Perceptions of research

Before embarking on developing children and young people as researchers it is important to find out perceptions of research that participants already have and whether they've been involved in any research activity before. Sometimes students may already have been engaged in shaping and leading their own research or the adults they're working with may be fearful about letting students explore their own research methods beyond more traditional ways. This activity is very simple but opens up discussion about research linked to participants' experience. Working in school groups participants are asked to attach post-it notes with their thoughts and experiences on to large sheets of paper headed 'What is research?' and 'What research have you been involved in?' The information from this activity can be used to inform planning and evaluation and can be used as a baseline for seeing how participants' perceptions change during research development and engagement.

Data collection methods carousel

This approach to introducing children and young people to a range of simple data collection methods has worked well with primary and secondary aged students in a number of different schools (Frost, 2007). Five tables are set up each with a different research method activity. Students then work their way round these tables in groups of six, changing table activities every 10 – 15 minutes. The methods introduced include open-ended questionnaires, scale-rated questionnaires, naturalistic and systematic observation and using pictures. Students are encouraged to reflect on their own experience as they undertake these activities and use their reflections to consider the strengths, weaknesses and ethical issues associated with each method. For example students often respond that methods requiring a lot of writing may not be the best methods for consulting young children. Engaging with these methods in a practical and enjoyable way enables students to gain a better grasp of their scope and limitations as tools.

Data analysis

Reducing large amounts of data to a manageable size and identifying the meaning within it is a challenge for all researchers. This activity of analysis becomes even more challenging for young researcher when that data comes in the handwriting, language and concepts of others, especially adults. This activity helps pairs of participants to analyse the answers to four short questionnaires. It involves them looking for key words within simple sentences, writing these on a grid and thinking about any themes that might connect theses keywords. Some of the answers to the questionnaires, although true, are deliberately unusual and provide a good opportunity for discussing prejudices and trustworthiness of data. Finally each pair is asked to share their themes and how they arrived at these with the whole group. This process enables participants to see that a range of conclusions may be

drawn from data and the importance of checking their data against other sources where possible (Frost and Prince, 2008)

Designing your research

This activity helps students generate ideas about possible research topics and work through a process of translating an abstract idea into a manageable plan. At the outset this is achieved through using a sheet with four headings on. These headings could allow for students to explore anything they are interested in at school or outside of school or may be focused on an area of school life they want to explore or improve. Students work in groups of four to six and write their ideas down on post-it notes which they then stick under the headings to ensure each pupil has an equal opportunity to contribute. Each student then selects the subject they are most interested in researching ad places this on another sheet. A process of voting then takes place where students vote for the three subjects they would most like to explore. The most popular post-it note is placed in the centre of a new piece of paper and students are asked to write down what they want to find out about this subject, who from and through what methods and over what time scale. This can then be refined further in another session.

Scenarios

Anticipating what issues are likely to arise when developing young researchers is always hard. This activity has been developed to help those adults supporting young researchers to engage with some real life situations and discuss them with others before embarking on their own journey. Six scenarios are introduced and participants choose to discuss one or two in pairs. Topics range from young students wanting to research why people are murdered to supporting students when the research gets tough to managing staff and parent reactions where communication has broken down at some point in the research process. After considering these scenarios participants are invited to explain to the rest of the group what issues they could see arising and how they would deal with them. Discussion is encouraged before and after they are given the accounts of how other practitioners went about dealing with each of the six situations in real life.