

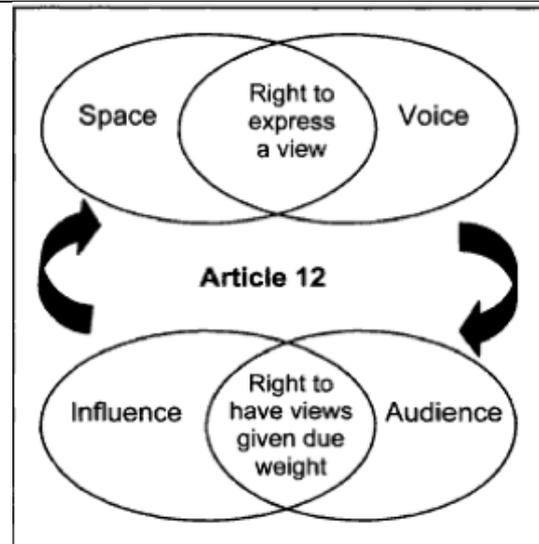
Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: Queen’s University Belfast
Unit of Assessment: 25 (Education)
Title of case study: Improving Awareness and Understanding of the Government’s Obligation to Involve Children in Decision-Making
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study reports the impact on awareness and understanding of children’s rights by policy makers, practitioners and children. This was achieved through the development of a legally sound and research-based but user-friendly model for understanding and implementing Article 12 of the UNCRC. This model has been used by the Northern Ireland and Irish Children’s Commissioner, Non-governmental organisations, other Higher Education Institutions, government departments and teachers to inform policy makers, practitioners and children and young people about the obligation to give children’s views due weight in decision-making. The research model and the practical impact it has had has extended understanding beyond the traditionally used concept of the “voice of the child” or “pupil voice” by emphasizing the legal obligation to ensure that children’s views have an influence on decision-making, with direct effects on policy and practice and also enabling government to fulfil its additional obligation under Article 42 of the UNCRC to ensure that the rights in the UNCRC are widely known among adults and children alike.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child requires governments to ensure that children’s rights are respected. Article 12 requires those employed by the state such as teachers and policy makers to give children’s views due weight in all matters affecting them.</p> <p>The initial research conducted was undertaken as part of a research grant award from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) in 2003/4 to inform its priorities for office [4]. The inter-disciplinary team consisted of: Lundy, Professor of Education, QUB (PI); with Kilkelly, Professor of Law, University College Cork; Scraton, Professor of Law, QUB; Kilpatrick, Reader in Child Care, QUB). The remit was to identify areas where children’s rights were ignored or underplayed. The team collected interviews with over 1000 children and 350 adult stakeholders. The initial research identified a lack of compliance with Article 12 of the UNCRC (children’s right to have their views given due weight) as one of the cross-cutting issues affecting children in all aspects of their lives, including education. Children and young people consistently reported frustration that their views were not being listened to and taken seriously. They also reported feeling unable to influence important decisions that were affecting them.</p> <p>The research indicated that one of the factors that was hindering the full realisation of the right was the fact that the precise nature of Article 12 was not fully understood by UNCRC duty-bearers (Lundy, 2007 [1]). It is often described under the banner of ‘pupil voice’, ‘the voice of the child’ or ‘the right to be heard’, but this lacks genuine understanding of the rights of children and young people. In view of this, a model for rights-compliant children’s participation was developed which offers a legally sound but practical conceptualisation of Article 12 of the UNCRC. This model (presented under the headline “<i>voice is not enough</i>”) suggests that implementation of Article 12 requires consideration of four inter-related concepts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPACE: Children must be given the opportunity to express a view • VOICE: Children must be facilitated to express their views • AUDIENCE: The view must be listened to. • INFLUENCE: The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.

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The model provides a practical précis of Article 12 that condenses the wording of the provision whilst emphasising engagement with children and young people. Moreover, in its articulation of the meaning of each of the four concepts, it makes an original contribution to our understanding of Article 12 as follows:

- it connects the successful implementation of Article 12 to other UNCRC rights, including the right to information, non-discrimination and guidance from adults;
- it underlines the fact the Article 12 is a right and not a duty;
- it place emphasis on neglected aspects of the obligation, in particular the obligation to give children’s views “due weight”;
- it articulates the responsibility of duty-bearers both in terms of encouraging and facilitating children to form and express their views; and
- it corrects a misunderstanding that the right applies only where a child is capable of expressing a mature view ([1], [2], [3]).



The model has been applied and further articulated in a series of research papers ([2], [3]) and, in order to facilitate its implementation in practice, a checklist has been developed for those working with children and young people. The checklist provides simple questions that practitioners can use to both plan and audit the participation of children in decision-making and policy development.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Publications:

[1] Lundy, L., (2007) ‘Voice is not enough’: Conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child’, *British Educational Research Journal*, 33(6): 927-942. This journal is one of the leading international education research journals and this article has consistently been one of BERJ’s most read and most cited publications in the past five years. As of July 2013, it is recorded as having received over 160 citations on Google Scholar and on Publish or Perish.

[2] Lundy, L. and McEvoy, L. (2009) Developing outcomes for education services: a children’s rights-based approach, *Journal of Effective Education*, 1, 43-60.

[3] Lundy and McEvoy, L. (2012) Children’s Rights and Research Processes: Assisting children to (in)formed views. *Childhood*, 19(1), 116- 129.

Grants:

[4] Children’s Rights in Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, ((2004-2005). (Lundy, L (PI), with Kilkelly, U., Kilpatrick, R., Scraton, P.)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The **major impact** is that this model has **enabled policy makers and practitioners**, including teachers (all of whom have obligations as UNCRC duty bearers), to **implement children’s right to participate in decision-making more effectively** by providing a legally-sound but user-friendly model of understanding Article 12 which has improved understanding and facilitated and promoted implementation.

Impact on children, young people and teachers

The model has been used to teach children and young people in Northern Ireland about their rights under Article 12, through its inclusion in the core Key Stage 3 (KS3) curriculum text for 'Learning for Life and Work' – a statutory area of learning in the Northern Ireland Curriculum (C). The incorporation into the core KS3 curriculum in Northern Ireland since 2008 means that it will have impacted upon up to 325,000 children and young people, based in 216 post-primary school settings. The accessibility of the model is further evidenced by the fact that it has been used widely by NGOs and other educators to inform adults and children about Article 12. For example, Playboard, Northern Ireland's leading play agency, has **reproduced it in full in its Play Quest brochure [A]**, which advises the play and leisure sector on children's participation in decision-making. It is also used extensively by staff in other Higher Education Institutions in its training of teachers, lawyers and other childhood professionals and has, for example, been identified as "pivotal" in the Oxford Bibliography of Childhood Studies [B]. The model has been adopted by a range of training organisations, including for example the SiS Catalyst project that trains science educators across Europe [F].

Impact on Policy

Within Northern Ireland, the research has had a **significant impact** on the **work of the Children's Commissioner's office**. The research, described by NICCY as a "**significant milestone in children's rights in Northern Ireland**" (<http://www.niccy.org/article.aspx?menuid=11865>) was used to determine the initial priorities for the Commissioner's office. These included a core priority around children's participation in decision-making, with education identified as a particular area of concern. Moreover, one of NICCY's core roles is to advise government on the fulfilment of their obligations under the UNCRC. As part of this, it has distributed it in **policy briefings to all government departments**, in a paper called "Having a Say" which outlines and recommends Lundy's 2007 participation model as a means of understanding and implementing Article 12. See (<http://www.niccy.org/Makeitright/childrenhavingasay/>) ([G], [H]). It has also used the model extensively in its training of public officials in relation to Article 12. NICCY's participation officer [D] has confirmed this as follows: "*we have referenced your model in various training programmes including with social workers, health professionals and teachers to get them to consider various case studies and whether they are truly implementing Article 12. It has been a great help at getting people to understand the indivisibility of rights and they need to understand the CRC in its entirety rather than individual articles, which are often summarised in one line that fails to explain the nuances of each individual article. Most recently we have used your article with our own participation awards panel [who provide awards to public officials for effective participation] to help them articulate various models of participation.*"

Within the Republic of Ireland, the model is used by the Irish Ombudsman for Children, Emily Logan, to explain and promote the obligations in Article 12 to those who work with children [E]. It has also been selected by the Irish Minister for Children and Young People to underpin the Irish National Strategy on Children's Participation (to be implemented in 2013). This promotes compliance with the UNCRC in the Republic of Ireland as part of the National Children's Strategy. Anne O'Donnell, Head of Policy and Citizenship Participation in the Ministry identified the reasons for selecting the model over other international participation models as follows: "*Lundy's model has been identified as the most appropriate to underpin the policy because it uses a rights based approach to involving children in decision-making and is non-hierarchical, in that it does place any one form of participation above or below another. The model is accessible and user friendly in that it translates complex children's rights principles, such as the interdependence and interrelated nature of a number of rights, into a succinct model which assists policy makers in clearly understanding and articulating their obligations under the UNCRC*" [I]. Professor Lundy has been appointed to the panel that will advise on and oversee the implementation of the strategy.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Impact on practitioners and children and young people

[A] Playquest brochure:

www.thebigdealni.com/Branches/YouthNet/BigDealNI/Files/Documents/uploads/docs/playquestweb.pdf

[B] Oxford Bibliography of Childhood Studies

<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199791231/obo-9780199791231-0013.xml?rskey=7veWnX&result=72&q=>

[C] Copy of the KS3 Learning for Life and Work text used to teach pupils in NI about their rights under Article 12. Copy available on request.

[D] Email from NICCY Participation Officer

[E] Copy of speech of Ombudsman for Children in Ireland. See, for example, her keynote speech to the Institute of Guidance Counsellors. <http://www.igc.ie/News-&-Events/AGM-2013/Keynote-Speech---Emily-Logan>

[F] Email from Scientific Director of Groupe Traces.

Impact on policy

[G] Letter from Northern Ireland Children's Commissioner confirming the impact of the research on the decision to prioritise children's participation in the work of the office.

[H] Copy of the NICCY, "Having a Say" briefing which was distributed to all policy makers in Northern Ireland. (<http://www.niccy.org/Makeitright/childrenhavingasay/>)

[I] Letter from Office of the Minister for Children in the Republic of Ireland, confirming their decision to use this model as a basis for the implementation of Ireland's Participation Strategy.