

Institution: University of Leeds
Unit of Assessment: UOA36
Title of case study: Youth Amplified: enhancing confident expression in young people in public
<p>1.Summary of the impact</p> <p>Research by Coleman (University of Leeds, 2007-present) on the disengagement of young people from political democracy has contributed to public debate about citizenship education and the need to build stronger connections between political and popular culture. This record of research directly informed the creation and development of 'Youth Amplified', a suite of resources designed to inspire new ways for education providers to support young people in developing confident and effective speaking and listening skills.</p> <p>Evidence of engagement with the 'Youth Amplified' resources amongst leading education providers and over 200 schools across the UK can be used to demonstrate impact, as well as reported improvements of young people's ability to express themselves in public situations.</p>
<p>2.Underpinning research</p> <p>Research by Coleman (University of Leeds, 2007 - present) has focused on political engagement and citizenship, and in particular, on problems facing young people (aged between 11 and 18) who are increasingly encouraged to state their views in classrooms, school councils, community settings and virtual environments, but often lack the skills or confidence to do so. [1,2] Highlighting the important role that schools can play in teaching young people to develop and articulate arguments in a confident and effective fashion, Coleman's research has outlined a series of proposals intended to strengthen the capacity of young people to engage as democratic citizens. [3].</p> <p>In addition to positioning Coleman as an expert in this field, this research enabled Coleman to secure a grant in May 2011 from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, an independent grant-making organisation focusing on education and social justice [i], together with the Speaker's Corner Trust, a UK charity which promotes free expression, public debate and active citizenship. The grant provided the opportunity for Coleman to carry out further research into understanding the main challenges and barriers to public expression for young people, and subsequently to develop a practical programme designed to help and support them. [4,5]</p> <p>Coleman examined and evaluated the extent and quality of programmes and materials designed to enhance public expression (often referred to as 'speaking and listening skills'), both within and beyond the school curriculum, from October-December 2011. As a result of this research, Coleman was able to identify that while there was a drive to motivate young people to speak <i>about</i> a range of civic-related themes, there was very little material to show young people <i>how</i> to speak about these themes and other issues of concern to them [5].</p> <p>The grant also provided Coleman with the opportunity to further investigate young people's experiences of and frustrations in public speaking, by organising a series of face-to-face interviews, surveys and workshops from January-March 2012 with young people from schools in Leeds, the Leeds Youth Service and a youth theatre. Coleman worked with an applied drama practitioner to run the workshops. Drawing on previous theoretical and empirical research [1-3], and the findings of the interviews, surveys and workshops, Coleman then identified six expressive capacities (confidence; projection; persuasion; negotiation; listening and argumentation) which were integral in helping young people overcome difficulties in communicating to wider audiences. [5,6]</p> <p>Each expressive capacity then formed the content of the 'Youth Amplified' web-based educational resources, which were specifically designed to support young people in the development of these skills. The online resources offer opportunities for group learning, lesson plans, and video stories</p>

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for teachers across the curriculum as well as youth workers. Written by **Coleman** and designed by Bold Creative, a digital agency which engages with hard to reach groups with a view to empowering young people, the resources were launched on a new 'Youth Amplified' website in May 2012, a strategy informed by **Coleman's** research on digital media and engagement [6].

3. References to the research

[1] Coleman, S. (2005). Remixing Citizenship. *Democracy and young people's use of the Internet*. Carnegie UK Trust, London.

[2] Coleman, S. (2007). Digital voices and analogue citizenship. Bridging the gap between young people and the democratic process. *Public policy research* 13(4):257-261. DOI: 10.1111/j.1070-3535.2006.00451.x

[3] Coleman, S. (2008). Doing IT for themselves: Management versus autonomy in youth e-citizenship. *Civic life online: Learning how digital media can engage youth*, MIT Press, 189-206.

[4] Coleman, S. (2013a) 'Who Feels What, When and How' in Coleman, S. *How Voters Feel*, Cambridge University Press, pp 191-236

[5] Coleman, S. (2013) 'Citizenship and the Speaking Subject', *Citizenship Studies*. DOI: 10.1080/13621025.2013.820392

[6] Coleman, S. (2013) 'The Challenge of Digital Hearing', *Journal of Digital and Media Literacy*

[i] A grant of £74,500 for the 'Expressing Citizenship' project was awarded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (<http://www.phf.org.uk>) to the University of Leeds and Speakers' Corner Trust in May 2011.

4. Details of the impact

Evidence of engagement with the 'Youth Amplified' resources can be used to demonstrate how **Coleman's** research has informed debate, made available new content and influenced practice for education providers.

There is also strong evidence of improvements in young people's confidence when speaking in public and their ability to express ideas and opinions in communities, schools and workplaces, as a direct result of engaging with the 'Youth Amplified' resources.

In terms of informing and influencing education providers, by October 2012 over 200 schools across England and Wales had registered an interest in incorporating the 'Youth Amplified' resources into teaching and the "comprehensive guide for educators" on the website has been downloaded over 300 times since the website's launch.

Teachers who have adopted the 'Youth Amplified' resources have reported marked improvements in the confidence and ability of students, where they are now able to speak in public in ways that they were not able to do previously. For example:

By the end of the second session, all students successfully stood in front of the group and delivered a speech without notes, something which I think they were highly unlikely to feel confident doing at the start ... [A]

Between January and May 2013, over 30 workshops, designed to supplement the online resources, were requested by a variety of schools, youth centres, University student groups and adult education classes. The aim of these workshops was to help teachers and youth workers support young people to develop and articulate arguments in a confident and effective fashion.

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Feedback from these workshops suggests that exposure to both the online resources and face-to-face activity sessions led young people to feel more confident about applying newly-discovered principles of confident self-expression:

The student's feedback afterwards was extremely positive, all of them believed that it has increased their confidence in performing before a crowd and they felt prepared to do it again ... An unexpected outcome from the workshop was the students wanting to deliver something similar to younger years in the school. As we are trying to develop not only non-academic skills in our students, including leadership, this was a break through. [B]

Working in collaboration with the Twist Partnership, which works with disadvantaged school students to enhance their civic and leadership skills, **Coleman** ran two workshops for year 11 pupils from the Langdon School in Newham, East London. Twist's Education Director commented on the impact of these sessions:

During the workshops, the students seemed to grow in confidence immensely. Students who had been quiet and reserved for most the year suddenly found that they were able to speak out in front of a large group. The most striking of these was Robin who is normally extremely shy and silent but managed a dramatic reading to a large audience. She said that she never thought that she would be able to do anything like that. I was surprised at how many shy and reserved students seemed to find a "voice". A year 11 boy, who had been silent for most of the trip, flourished and completely stole the show. [C]

After working with the Youth Amplified resources, she was of the opinion that

The change in the students was quite miraculous. I would love to incorporate the project into some of the leadership programmes that Twist runs for young people. I feel that it could have a dramatic effect and most particularly on those young people who are at risk of exclusion.

Although designed to be used by 11 – 18 year olds, the creation of new educational materials from **Coleman's** research has also engaged wider audiences, as evidenced by the adoption of the 'Youth Amplified' resources by the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), the UK's largest voluntary-sector provider of adult education, as part of its Community Action Learning Programme. Workshops, based on the expressive capacities identified by **Coleman**, have been run for over 200 WEA students to date. **Coleman** is currently collaborating with the organisation's director of education to further adapt some of the content for additional use by adult learners, to inform personal and professional development.

As the WEA moves forward into a new phase of its work, responding to the difficult social and economic pressures around us, we shall be focusing much more on the skills and values of citizenship and will be making use of Coleman's research – and working with him – with a view to ensuring that the courses we offer are relevant to the needs of people who have much to contribute to the social conversation, but lack the confidence or verbal skills to make themselves heard. [D]

As further evidence of the research's scope, the 'Youth Amplified' resources have also been used throughout a series of workshops from January to May 2013, aimed at encouraging youth participation in local government. This has had a notable impact in the capacity of youth representatives in Leeds Youth Council, the UK Youth Parliament and the Leeds Children in Care Council to speak up about issues that affect them:

The training gave me more confidence in leading sessions during the Leeds Youth Council meetings, and gave me the confidence needed to be an authority, and make my voice heard. (Student, Notre Dame College, Leeds, and Chair of Leeds Youth Council) [E]

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As another example of the research's influence in informing and shaping strategy and policy provisions aimed at young people, its value has also been credited by Leeds City Council, which is providing a programme of training and personal development for the first time ever, to equip children and young people with the skills and confidence to meaningfully contribute to decision making processes:

[T]he findings of the research has given a good intellectual foundation on which decisions about the direction of youth voice and participation in Leeds can be based. For example, the research has proved useful when designing and writing the new 2013-2015 Children and Young People's Voice and Influence Strategy."

(Voice, Influence and Change Co-ordinator, Children's Services, Leeds City Council) [E]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[A] Letter from a teacher, Spen Valley Sports College, Liversedge, West Yorkshire

[B] Letter from a teacher, Prince Henry's Academy School, Otley, West Yorkshire

[C] Letter from Education Director, the Twist Partnership

[D] Letter from director for education, Workers' Educational Association

[E] Letter from Voice, Influence and Change Co-ordinator, Children's Services, Leeds City Council