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**Children's Citizenship, Education and Europe:
moving beyond rights to embrace respect and recognition**

**Children, Identity, Citizenship and Europe
Istanbul, May 2008**



**The
Centre**

promoting and researching children and young people's
participation, inclusion and empowerment



Listen Up!

Children and Young People Talk:
About Their Rights in Education



- **Aspinwall, Crowley and Larkins (2003)**
- **European citizenship that is “less ethnocentric, more diverse, more inclusive” (Ross (2003))**
- **Children’s citizenship: a lived practice of rights, responsibility, respect/recognition and membership (Lister 2007)**
- **Children’s actual citizens (Jans 2004)**

Introduction

- **Research Process and Rights 3 Top Priorities**
- **Play and Friendship**
 - **Why children as citizens rather than rights holders**
- **Discrimination and being listened to**
 - **How recognition addresses structural/cultural/emotional issues**
- **Towards an EU Strategy for Children's Rights**
- **The EU Charter on Fundamental Human Rights**
- **The European Parliament Resolution in response to the strategy**

Research Process

- **UNCRC**
- **Swansea Youth Forum**
- **Reference Group** designed groups sessions, themed and prioritised data, wrote and presented recommendations to Minister.

- **2 sessions** each with **170 children and young people**
- **Schools**
- **Purposively sampled Roma Gypsy Traveller and BME groups**

Listen Up: Friendship and Play

Some people refuse to be friends with people because they live in different houses. Some people live in small houses and some people live in mansions. We think that this needs to be sorted out.

Without friends you wouldn't have a life. Life would be boring. In school, if you need to borrow glue or a pen, they can help you. They sometimes can be more important than family.



Resources



Membership

The Resolution acknowledges structural barriers to participating in friendship group

Listen Up: Play

You have been inside doing your work then you go outside and run round and forget your work and feel energetic.

You are all tired and you can get your concentration back.

... If you get to play then it stops you being naughty

... and then you work better after.



Play enables children to fulfil the responsibilities and thereby enjoy the rights of education

Why Citizenship not rights?

- **Access to rights is limited by**
 - **group membership**
 - **structural influences (eg poverty, racism)**
- **Enjoying rights contingent on responsibilities**
- **Children are rights makers and shakers not passive recipients or consumers**
- **Need a model of children's citizenship that engages with issues of membership, structure and agency**

Listen Up: Bullying and Discrimination

Despite EU protection principles in Treaties

We get bullied at school

All the kids pick on us

Teachers blame us for when things go wrong.

One teacher in Maths kicked someone in the back of his chair just because he didn't understand what was going on. It really hurt him. Someone told the other teacher and she said "well he deserved it for what he was doing". She didn't do anything.



**Bullying
from teachers
and pupils**

Listen Up: Racism and Ethno-centrism

[The Teacher] says dark coloured people are yellow. He picks on one person because of their colour.

One teacher said if any Muslims take the mick out of you tell them “At least I don’t pray like a bull”.

... She says like a rude comment if you have a black face.

- **Not new or unique to Wales**
- **Membership of group enjoyment of rights**

This is why European Citizenship needs to be “less ethnocentric, more diverse, more inclusive” (Ross 2003)

Can European Citizenship be inclusive?

- **EU Strategy and Resolution acknowledge and suggest measures to address racism**
- **BUT**
- **European Identity – ethnic and religious difference**
- **Citizenship – drawing lines of belonging**
- **EU economic and migration practices serve to legitimate racism.**

- **Essential to acknowledge and value difference not simply promote white Christian, Western European norms.**

Recognition: sameness and difference

*Individual Parity of Status
removing cultural barriers to participation*

Frazer (2001)



Sameness

Treat people the same and give them another chance and try not to be racist or sexist.

They think that we are Travellers then we are different. But we are not different, we are just Travellers. We're still people like everyone else.

Difference – changing institutionalised patterns of behaviour

Sometimes teachers treat us badly and judge people's religions, ... [they] don't give an opportunity like, 'Who wants to run an errand?'. And they look at you and say, 'Definitely not you. I don't trust you'.

Listen Up: Being listened to

Being heard and defended, regarding bullying

People call us Gypos, we talk to the teachers and they do nothing about it

As opposed to:

Some teachers say, “If he says that again tell me”. They shout at him. And it stops.

***Recognition demonstrated in action
and at an emotional or individual level***

Recognition: Understanding and mutual respect

kind-hearted person who always listens to your problems and sorts them out and someone who cares for you and makes you feel safe and real happy.

- **“affective acceptance and encouragement”
(Honneth 2001)**
- **Building self-esteem**
- **For qualities that promotes parity for all**

Listening and Choice

Listen to us: Listen to our ideas,
Listens to your problems
Listen to both sides of a story
Listens to what we have to say
Listen to any complaints we've got
Let us choose what to do in maths
and all lessons, (which books to use)

Fun and Happy

I would like school to be more funny
and teachers to tell jokes
Make us laugh always happy
is sound and he will have a laugh and
is serious when there is a serious
matter.
Funny/has a laugh every lesson;

Kind and Supportive

Always be kind to me
Supportive;
When I'm in a mood she talks to me, she's
nice
she talks to me and helps me with stuff
A kind hearted person who always listens
to your problems and sorts them out and
someone who care for you and makes you
safe and feel real happy.

Respect

If children know something the teacher should let you put your
point across without any hassle
Believe us show us more respect
Doesn't talk down to us Not calling us a monster;
They let you wear your own clothes
Don't joke about who we fancy!
Teach us as secondary school children.
They should be friendly, equal to each other and the students
They should learn manners

Understanding

Teachers should understand our culture
Someone who if you get a question wrong
don't scream your head off
They are kind and fun people who
understand your feelings!
A teacher that understands that we are
children and not super robots!

Fair

Treat everyone the same
Don't give you a warning if you haven't got equipment
Let you eat what you want
They let you go to the toilet
Not too strict GOOD discipline
Doesn't put the blame on others.
Don't punish us for untidy work when we can't help how we write.
don't turn against someone who has messy handwriting.
they need to be patient.
Treat people the same and give them another chance
Try not to be racist of sexist

Teachers Code of Conduct

**A teacher who is very kind
and always shares a laugh
and always sticks up for you
when you're in trouble.**

**A good teacher is a person
who understands you and
always makes a good lesson for you.**

Relaxed

They let you get away with stuff
Let you chew in class
Lets us take food and drink out in class
Don't shout all the time
Informal, cool, wicked, laid back,
Let us bring games in and Gameboys.

Interesting and Able

Explains things
Talks about people in the world that have less
and children in AFRICA
Always read stories
Speak Welsh
Tells us all we need to know

Work Level

They understand your ability to work
Don't give you so much homework
Do less work in lessons
Wait until we finish our work before
going on to something else
Don't expect us to write an essay in five
minutes or less!!

Being listened to and the EU

- **Article 24: Express views and be taken seriously dependent on age and maturity**
 - **Institutionalised pattern that impedes parity**
- **Child's Best Interests of primary importance**

James, Curtis and Birch (2008) - in our risk averse society, adults claims to override children's decision making form a system of control which is legitimised as protection. In practice however, the limiting of children's independent decision-making disables children, as it does not allow them access to the experiences that would enable competence in decision making to develop.

Misrecognition: Deprive of conditions to flourish (Honneth 2001)

Social Subordination not Parity of Participation

- **Article 14**
- **Child's right to be educated**
Vs. Parent's rights to choose the content of this
- **Article 32**
- **Children's rights to be protected from paid work**
Vs. Subject to compulsory education

Children to have equal status rather than be the subject of adults

They [teachers] should be friendly, equal to each other and the students

Conclusion and next steps

- **Recognition** conceived as promoting parity of participation and building self-esteem through respect can help citizenship become a concept that promotes justice and inclusion
- **Challenge:** for this opportunity to be realized more fully in education and all aspects of children's lives.
- **Next Task:** getting marginalized children taken seriously in EU developments on children's rights.

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