Extending Pupil Voice to Improve Assessment for Learning (AfL) in classrooms (CPAL2)

Summary of Impact

Scientific Impact

The main scientific impact of CPAL2 is not one of the intended outcomes, which were aimed directly at achieving educational (social) impact by promoting pupil-friendly ways to extend classroom dialogue about previously reported Assessment for Learning (AfL) research findings. We believe this study has made a small but significant contribution to methodological understanding to how students can be engaged ethically to ensure maximum impact of educational and social research findings on matters affecting them. Participatory research with children has become relatively commonplace yet few examples exist exemplifying their participation in knowledge dissemination and research impact activities and strategies. Using a children’s rights’ compliant methodology, this inquiry documents and critically examines the effectiveness of a follow-on project concerned to maximize dissemination and impact of key findings from a previous study. CPAL1 identified 10 key principles that helped and hindered students’ learning and assessment in KS3 classrooms. Systematic analysis of the CPAL2 research process and impact data identified a number of underpinning themes on their effective participation which have become disseminated as research-based guidelines. These reinforce the power of young people’s engagement, creativity and discernment in planning for research impact. They also underscore the importance of sound ethical negotiation, the role of impact capacity-building with them, the generative potential of creative and imaginative activities, the effectiveness of successful child-centered events and the penetrative power of interactive social media. Methodologically, the utility of the UNCRC Art. 12 based model of space, voice, audience and influence (Lundy, 2007) as a heuristic for young people’s engagement in research impact activities is confirmed particularly in relation to giving children’s voice ‘due weight’.

The main finding is that children’s participation in research dissemination and impact assures their views are given ‘due weight’ on matters affecting them. UNCRC Art. 12 is the main rationale underpinning children’s ‘right to have a say’ and ‘pupil voice’ in educational/social research but less is understood about how to assure the second half of this right, concerned with their views being listened to and having due influence on matters of significance. CPAL2 has developed practical and ethical guidelines for use by other researchers. These are presented as 29 Steps under 4 headings:

Planning for Impact;
Working Creatively with Research Findings;
Strategic Dissemination and Impact;
Follow-through, Evaluation and Celebration.

The main outputs are: Research-based Guidelines ‘Engaging children and young people in research dissemination and impact’; Interdisciplinary research methods training methods on children’s engagement in dissemination and impact in childhood research. (eg in doctoral research training modules) and , national and international conference presentations.
The scientific impact was achieved by careful planning, documentation and analysis of an ethical, consultative process (ie CPAL2) over a 14 week period with over 100 pupils at Key Stage 3 (years 8-10) in four pilot schools in Northern Ireland (NI) combined with the work of a student advisory group (n=6) that was engaged throughout the project. The impacts were achieved through workshops, creative strategies and involvement of the advisory young people in all decisions and events concerned with the project. All aspects of the process were subsequently systematically evaluated and analysed thematically in relation to what enabled or hindered the young people’s ability to participate effectively and have influence. The guidelines were discussed and checked by the advisory group members before publication.

The guidelines have been disseminated through the CPAL2 website ie. made publically available, distributed to all staff members in the School of Education, through the Centre for Children’s Rights and the Queen’s interdisciplinary initiative, Improving Children’s Lives, and also to doctoral students. More broadly, associated conference presentations to academic research communities focused on childhood research (eg Norway, Republic of Ireland, England, Scotland & European) have been accompanied by reference to the research-based guidelines now having increasing impact as a published and publically available resource.

**Economic and Social Impact**

The main impact has been educational, focusing on improving conditions for learning and assessment in NI primary and post-primary schools through paying attention to students’ views. Measuring behaviour change was beyond the scope of CPAL2. However there is clear evidence of a number of significant, sustained effects: the original key findings have been distributed to all post-primary schools in NI;

100 pupils in 4 schools developed an animated film to disseminate the 10 AfL principles (as opposed to the originally proposed poster) in order better to stimulate conversations between teachers and learners.

The film ‘A Classroom Tale’ has so far received **over 5,000 hits** on Youtube.

There are associated online surveys, using Qualtrics, to evaluate the impact of the film from teacher and student perspectives.

An additional 500 students have viewed and evaluated the impact of the film and provided indications of how it has been and should be used (see main findings).

Advisory students contributed to a dedicated website and dissemination events for 100 stakeholders. (see www.CPAL2.org)

85 teachers from 62 schools took part in a bespoke CPD programme based on the 10 student AfL principles. (see Outcome: Reprt on RTU summer school workshops)
Policy makers have referred to the 10 AfL principles and the value of the research training (see Outcome policy supporting statement).

Further resources have been made available across all schools via an ICT learning platform (C2KNI). The film and resources has been adapted for use in initial teacher education courses in NI, Canada and Norway.

The main outputs are:

- A short animated student-directed film **A Classroom Tale** to disseminate the key findings hosted on Youtube ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfxWZayRoGI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfxWZayRoGI)) (4,800 views);
- Access to the film and to teacher and student surveys on the C2KNI technology platform for schools;
- AfL classroom activities for teachers including stimulus postcards, student-designed leaflets etc to encourage deeper conversations between teachers and learners on the best conditions for learning and assessment.;
- Dedicated project website ([www.cpal2.org](http://www.cpal2.org)) hosting project outputs;
- Child-animated poster on the 10 pupil AfL principles;
- Staff development training resources /programme for primary and post-primary teachers on developing greater student participation in classrooms.;
- Input on initial teacher education programmes in 5 university/colleges.

**Findings**: evaluation of 500 pupil responses indicate that they enjoyed the film; related to the challenges encountered by the central character (Alex); found the animation a useful resource for identifying issues with teachers that either help or inhibit their learning and assessment. There was a convergence of inter-school and cross-gender comparisons with the precise same ordering by male and female respondents of the top 3 and bottom 2 AfL ‘pupil principles’. In terms of overall impact, students, indicated that film sequels should cover other school-related issues (such as ‘bullying’, ‘friendships’ and ‘shyness’) confirming that the way the film was made and disseminated was (i) a highly effective method of illustrating the fears and apprehensions of young people; (ii) provided an accessible and informative account of ‘Alex’ successfully overcoming his/her challenges; and (iii) afforded a range of opportunities for teachers and students to examine individual and collective barriers to improved learning and assessment. Gaps were found to continue to exist between teachers’ intentions to enact the ‘spirit’ of AfL and their practices.
The CPAL2 impacts and outcomes were achieved by:

* Establishment of a User Advisory Group; invited representatives from education policy and practice communities (n=10) attended 3-4 meetings to advise on progress and knowledge exchange. (CPAL2Website; Dissemination through C2KNI)

* Establishment of a Student Research Advisory Group (n=8): invited representatives from years 11-12 from one pilot school: to obtain baseline views; advise on design, interpretation of interim findings and engage in dissemination and impact events. (Research-based guidelines; Impact Launch (n= 85)

* Work in 4 pilot post-primary schools and with N=100 KS 3 pupil groups participating in creative developmental work to check, adapt and design pupil-friendly dissemination materials for 10 AfL research-based pupil messages and develop characters, script ideas for animation etc. Evaluations were undertaken in every session and by every pupil. (A Classroom Tale film. Plus Evaluations of impact).

* Youtube hosting of short film and associated surveys

* Work with teachers in 4 pilot schools and CPD workshops to develop co-constructive approaches to learning and assessment that enhance pupil participation.

* Three full-day CPD training workshops run by the research team with primary (n= 58) and post-primary teachers (n=24) from across N. Ireland who volunteered to attend. (RTU CPD programme report and evaluation)

* Dissemination and evaluation with 500 pupils and teacher development activities undertaken in additional schools as requested. (schools n= 6: 2 primary: 4 post-primary (2 grammar: 1 integrated: 1 secondary)). Pupil samples n= 507. Teachers = 20 (10 primary 10 post-primary) (Report on effectiveness of film as impact).

* Distribution of A Classroom Tale and teacher/student resources through C2KNI Learning platform has happened and using Fronter and Equella systems used as online teaching ‘rooms’ (Online resources) is underway.

Conference presentations and invited keynotes nationally and internationally. (Proceedings).

It could be argued that the scientific impact for this study has been relatively limited but this was not the original intention of the project. As a small-scale ESRC Follow-on funding project, the emphasis on CPAL2 was placed on working with students to find the best means to disseminate and create impact for findings from an earlier study that had consulted pupils. Having unintended scientific impact with a small ‘s’ has been a bonus and has led to the publication of a manual ‘Assuring Research Dissemination and Impact with Children and Young People: Research based guidelines,’ which is likely to prove invaluable to research students and networks who undertake childhood research once disseminated more widely.
**Unexpected:** We have fulfilled and in many cases exceeded all the objectives outlined in the original proposal over the time period. The main unexpected outcome has been how much interest there has been in the project, despite the increasingly pressurised climate in schools in NI. The CPAL2 project was timely injecting some reminders into a jaded education system of the value (‘spirit’) of formative assessment and student consultation at a point when pupil tracking and testing was in danger of swamping the application of AfL principles at the centre of the revised curriculum. The development of research-based guidelines on assuring children’s involvement in dissemination and impact has been an unexpected output. We will endeavour to monitor its impact.

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