Pupil participation in Scottish schools: how far have we come?

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Abstract

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989), which applies to all children under the age of 18, established the overarching principles guiding pupil participation. In most European states, signatories to the Convention have enacted policies to promote the voice of the child or young person in decisions that affect them. In education systems strategies to enhance the pupil participation are an increasing feature of deliberation on education for citizenship, curriculum flexibility, pedagogical approaches and assessment for learning. Despite the positive policy context and professional commitment to principles of inclusion, translating policy intentions so that the spirit of the legislation is played out in the day-to-day experiences of pupils is a constant challenge. This article reports on research that examines how pupil participation is understood and enacted in Scottish schools. It considers how the over-laying of diverse policies presents mixed messages to practitioners.

Keywords: learning participation, decision making, consultation.

Introduction: background and context

Participation work in Scottish schools has been subject to considerable development over the past fifteen years, building on influential work undertaken by the government funded Scottish Schools Ethos Network (1995-2005). The right of young people to have their voice heard and valued is embedded in the *Children (Scotland) Act* (1995), *Standards in Scotland's Schools Act* (2000), *Protecting Children and Young People: The Charter* (Scottish Government, 2004). A new school curriculum for pupils aged 3-18 years, *Curriculum for Excellence* was fully implemented in all Scottish schools from August 2010. The recent reform of the school curriculum strengthened the position of *Education for Citizenship* (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2002) as an established cross-curricular and whole school concern (see Cowan and McMurtry, 2009). The revised curriculum aims to achieve: clearly defined rounded outcomes for young people; smoother transition between different stages of education; new choice, space and time within the curriculum for teachers to design learning to suit the needs of young people (SEED, 2004:14). As the *Curriculum for Excellence* has developed, the strategic role afforded to pupil participation has become clearer. The new curriculum is organised around four central purposes: to enable each pupil to be a *successful learner, confident individual, responsible citizen,* and *effective contributor*. The increased profile afforded to pupil participation in Scottish schools is also reflected in evaluative criteria used in school inspections. The Scottish school inspectorate identifies pupil participation in eight of the ten dimensions of the school self-evaluation resource, *The Journey to Excellence* (HMIE, 2006).

Claims to enhanced participation are also prevalent within dominant discourse on 'personalisation' and 'choice' that is a feature of policies promoting curriculum flexibility. These include the removal of traditional 'age and stage' barriers governing pupil progress and the provision of wider opportunities for vocational learning. The policy document *Ambitious, Excellent Schools* (Scottish Government, 2004) focused attention on recognising the contribution and achievements of young people within and outside school. Enhanced pupil engagement in planning and evaluating learning has been sought through national, local authority and school-level strategies including the government-funded *Assessment is for Learning* programme (2002-07) (Hutchinson and Hayward, 2005), the normalisation of pupil self-evaluation and target-setting practices, and the formation of schools' councils (Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000). Enhanced pupil participation underpins the promotion of particular forms of pedagogic practice. Critical skills, cooperative and collaborative learning feature strongly amongst continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers in Scotland, in line with a pronounced emphasis on *Learning about Learning* (LTS, 2007).

In addition, the involvement of young people has been promoted through a range of peer support and peer mediation schemes, including circle time, circles of friends, restorative practices and 'solution-focused approaches' (Kane et al, 2007). This is consistent with an 'emerging affective tendency' (Hartley, 2003) across the UK; that is somewhat disparagingly described by Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) as the rise of a 'therapeutic pedagogy' intent on repairing learner identities (see also the critique offered by Furedi, 2009). Such trends reflect the influence in education of broader policies directed at social and personal well being. In the Scottish context, Clarke

(2005) has argued that the integrated community schools ('full service' schools) and Health Promoting Schools policies have achieved significant advances in developing participatory structures in the school system. Such policies position children and young people as service users and social actors.

Whilst this policy picture appears to be one of complementary and mutually reinforcing initiatives, research into the enactment of policies does not depict a uniform picture. A number of studies provide evidence that good practice in terms of pupil participation remains patchy (Alderson, 2000; Maitles and Deuchar, 2006; Hill et al, 2004; Children in Scotland and University of Edinburgh, 2010). Research suggests that pupil disillusionment with participation becomes greater as pupils progress to secondary school (Scottish Consumer Council, 2007; Scottish Government, 2007). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) review of Scottish education reinforces concern about continuity of experience on transition between primary and secondary school (Scottish Executive Education Department, 2007; OECD, 2007).

An established body of work has noted some limitations of pupil councils as models of engagement. When pupil and student councils are viewed as tokenistic or are unsupported by other means of pupil participation, young people have reported quite negative experiences of participation that may deter further engagement. Tokenistic or contrived forms of participation have the potential to negatively impact on adolescents' learning and attitudes to adults; *increasing* rather than reducing disaffection and disengagement. Ireland et al (2006) suggest that citizenship education is most effective where it provides a living model of democracy that

channels aspirations through transparent and egalitarian means. Case study research by Mills (2004) and Wyse (2004) suggest that many pupils are sensitive to contrived opportunities that have little influence on school decisions. Maitles and Deuchar (2006) suggest that pupil councils need to work alongside a wider range of other pupil committees and activities that together might constitute school-wide participative practice. Similarly, Allen et al (2005) argue that effective participative practice involves opening up spaces for students to develop their *own* issue specific initiatives.

This brief review of policy and research literature shows that pupil participation has featured strongly in policy and pedagogic discourse in Scotland in recent years. From a policy sociology perspective, it is widely acknowledged that policy intentions are subject to mediation as they are filtered, re-worked and enacted in school settings (Bowe et al, 1992; Cuban, 1998). Drawing on data from research involving a large-scale survey, analysis of curriculum artefacts and school case studies, this paper explores contemporary understandings and strategies to promote pupil participation as they are experienced in Scottish schools.

Research aim and objectives

This research was commissioned by Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) and conducted between December 2007 and June 2008. The aim of the research was to explore how Scottish schools conceive and implement participation and how this impacts on the daily experiences and decisions of teachers and pupils.

The study was commissioned to address the following objectives:

- To describe what school staff and pupils understand by the term pupil participation.
- To describe the range and usage of pupil participation mechanisms employed in schools.
- To identify the characteristics of schools and classrooms that facilitate effective pupil participation.
- To identify possible barriers to the development of pupil participation in schools and to make suggestions about how these can be overcome.

Methodology

A concurrent mixed-methods design was used to address the objectives. The principal methods of data collection were: an online questionnaire that sought quantitative data of participative practices in Scottish schools; analysis of curricular materials across a sample of Scottish schools; a small number of case studies that examined the nature of the participative practices within particular school settings.

The survey addressed the following themes: the level of involvement of staff in implementing participation; school strategies to support participation activities across the curriculum; factors that facilitate or inhibit participation; how barriers to participation can be overcome; and the benefits of participation. An online questionnaire was prepared using Zoomerang survey tools and (post-pilot) was

distributed by email to all schools registered on the Heads Together database (an online community for head teachers facilitated by Learning and Teaching Scotland) (LTS, 2010a). In April 2008, there were 2,176 primaries, 377 secondaries and 177 special schools in Scotland; a total of 2,721 schools nationally (Scottish Government, 2008). A total of 622 responses were received from 2,631 contacts, achieving a response rate of 24% which is typical for online surveys. Responses were received from 23 special schools (4%), 23 pre-schools (4%), 453 primary schools (74%), and 109 secondary schools (18%) distributed across all 32 local authorities in Scotland. The majority of responses were from headteachers (83%, 491 respondents). Responses to fixed response questions were tabulated using Zoomerang. Two members of the research team coded open response questions and compared a sample of responses to ensure consistency in coding. Analysis consisted of cross tabulation and significance testing using Chi-square. Any significant differences between school types/sectors were noted.

Key personnel with responsibility for developing the Education for Citizenship curriculum in each of the 32 local authorities were approached to recommend a range of schools to contribute to the research. Formal letters of request were sent to these schools by the research team. Materials were received from 19 state schools across 12 local authorities: four local authorities submitted materials on behalf of schools, and ten primary schools and five secondary schools submitted material directly. The materials consisted of a wide range of audio-visual, photographic and textual materials. Content analysis was applied to establish the meanings of participation and the range and usage of participation mechanisms.

Various criteria were used in the selection of four case study schools in the central belt of Scotland, in partnership with the Steering Group at Learning and Teaching Scotland. A secondary school and one of its feeder primaries were chosen for inclusion as research suggests that transition from primary to secondary can have an adverse effect on pupil participation (Scottish Consumer Council, 2007; Galton et al., 2003; Scottish Government, 2007). As these were both urban schools (School A and D), two further schools were selected from local authorities in more rural contexts. These included a primary school and secondary school (School B and C) located in different towns and serving a wide catchment area including adjacent rural settlements. All four schools were non-denominational state schools and varied in size and intake, with primary school rolls of 320 and 420 pupils and secondary school rolls of 780 and 1,350. The percentage of pupils registered for free school meals ranged from 7% in the suburban primary (Scottish average for primaries: 17%) to 24% for the urban secondary school (Scottish average for secondary schools: 12%) (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010b).

One or two day fieldwork visits were scheduled to complete a number of negotiated activities including a pupil-led school tour, participatory pupil workshops, lesson observation and teacher interviews. In preparation for the visits, the schools provided a range of materials that documented their activities promoting pupil participation including school newsletters, pupil projects and consultation materials. The workshop activities offered groups of between 12 and 26 pupils a variety of opportunities to express themselves and share their views of participation in the school with the research team. Workshop activities were adapted from the sourcebook, *Participation and Learning* (LTS and Save the Children, 2007) with support from an independent

advisory group of pupils (the Young People's Advisory Group LTS). Pupils and senior teachers in the secondary schools were involved in the selection of pupils from across year groups and ability groupings to avoid over representation of 'elite' groups.

A total of thirteen teachers across the four case study schools participated in semi-structured individual, pair or small group interviews. This included individual interviews with three headteachers (Schools A, B and D) and a deputy headteacher (School C). Other participating teachers were selected because of their involvement in initiatives such as the fair trade committee, pupil council and citizenship education. The interviews were forty minutes duration on average and were recorded to allow thematic analysis of full verbatim transcripts. The main research questions were used as the analytical framework.

Scope and limitations

The views of children and young people were incorporated into the process and development of the research and attempts were made to allow them to participate at all stages. An independent advisory group of pupils helped to refine the research instruments by reviewing the survey questions and case studies activities. In addition to the independent advisory group, pupils from the secondary schools helped to plan and implement workshops for their schools. Their advice supported the construction of pupil activities that were accessible and relevant to pupils' concerns and experience. Young people from the four schools were invited to contribute feedback on the draft findings (subject to ethical protocols). A bespoke online forum was

created to allow pupils across the case study schools to engage in dialogue about the research process and findings. However, in this paper it is the implications of the study for the teaching profession that are addressed. For the purposes of this paper, we draw only on those aspects of the study that address participation in terms of pedagogy (learning participation) and pupil involvement in formal school decision-making.

Care should be taken in making inferences from the survey findings due to the low response rate (24%). Not all respondents answered all questions in the survey. Documentation was submitted by a self-selecting sample of schools nominated by local authority gatekeepers. Only a small number of school case studies were feasible within the course of the commissioned research and these schools were nominated for interesting and potentially innovative practice in advancing pupil participation. Teacher interviewees were nominated by the headteacher or deputy headteacher in each case study school. Whilst the school visits provided opportunities for data gathering in specific school settings, these are observational 'snapshots' and more sustained research would be necessary to explore in depth the various strategies, drivers and constraints reported. The full findings and technical report can be found in the report to the funder (Cross et al, 2009).

Findings

The meanings of participation

11

Findings from the survey indicate that school staff predominantly perceive pupil participation in terms of forms of consultation. Seventy three per cent of respondents (346 of 475 respondents) associated pupil participation with *'involving pupils in consultation or evaluation, including meetings, questionnaires to pupils, voting and assemblies'*. Thirty-seven per cent of respondents (174 of 475 respondents) associated participation with the activities of school councils or pupil councils. Just over a third of respondents (161 of 475 respondents, 34%,) associated pupil participation with *'involving pupils in their own learning through target setting, review, self-assessment or personal learning plans'* and under 2% (8 of 475 respondents) reported that participation entailed *'involving pupils in curricular choices'*.

Where outside school factors were cited, this was primarily in relation to the organisation of community events. Parents were cited as a potential resource to be managed in support of the school's mission. In the case study visits, a small number (n=4) of primary and secondary teacher interviewees reported that a minority of parents considered the primary responsibility of the school to be the achievement of success in national assessments and questioned approaches that did not demonstrate a clear and immediate contribution to the achievement of this goal.

Pupil participation mechanisms and drivers

The main ways in which pupil participation was encouraged at *classroom level* was through working cooperatively or learning in teams (152 of 361 respondents, 42%). Conversely, at *school level* participation was advanced largely through the pupil council or forum, or pupil involvement in assemblies (276 of 369 respondents, 75%),

individual initiatives and awards (e.g. Eco-schools, healthy schools initiative) (194 of 369 respondents, 53%), and giving pupils specific responsibilities (e.g. playground monitor roles) (150 of 369 respondents, 41%). Three-quarters of respondents reported that their schools promoted participation primarily through community initiatives such as local arts and environmental projects (285 from 366 respondents, 78%); or additionally through specific award schemes (Duke of Edinburgh, RSPB, John Muir Trust) (93 of 366 respondents, 25%) or charity fund raising work (89 of 366 respondents, 24%). Thirteen per cent of respondents (47 of 369 respondents) reported that pupil participation included pupil involvement in deliberation on whole school planning decisions.

In response to a survey question about benefits resulting from the pupil participation approaches within their school, a high level of agreement was expressed. Respondents agreed or strongly agreed that pupil participation approaches contributed to: a *better ethos across the school* (386 of 417 respondents, 92%); *increased individual pupil achievement and confidence* (381 of 420 respondents, 91%); *better classroom learning relationships* (347 of 419 respondents, 82%); a *decrease in discipline and behaviour problems* (260 of 416 respondents, 62%).

Not surprisingly, the survey responses revealed some statistically significant differences between teachers working in primary and secondary schools (for the full technical report, see Cross et al, 2009). Primary schools were slightly more likely than secondary schools to agree that pupil participation had *'increased pupil achievement and confidence'*. Secondary schools were less likely to agree that pupil participation had led to a *'decrease in discipline and behaviour problems'*, and were more likely to

remain neutral on this item. Primary schools were more likely to agree that pupil participation had led to *'better classroom learning relationships and ethos across the school'*. However, these were differences of emphasis and degree, which perhaps reflect the different contexts of primary and secondary education (including differences of school and classroom organisation, school size, age of pupils, pupil and teacher relationships, assessment arrangements). These contextual differences may also go some way towards explaining the tendency for a greater proportion of pupils and staff to be involved in pupil participation activities in primary schools, and the greater tendency for primary schools to regard pupil, staff and parental attitudes as 'assets' in promoting pupil participation.

The pattern of participation indicated in the survey responses was also evident in documentation received from 19 schools. Again, the main forum for participation was through nationally endorsed initiatives such as enterprise activities, health promoting schools and Eco-schools; or through single issue campaigns such as fair trade initiatives. In three schools, documentation indicated deeper or extended forms of participation. These included: (1) a pupil-initiated campaign to reinstate a feature of curriculum provision, involving a presentation by the pupil council to the school council and a newsletter to parents; (2) the operation of a pupil management committee for a school's peer mediation scheme, involving organisation of a peer mediation conference for all schools in a local cluster; and (3) at local authority level, support for pupil-led research into approaches to enhance participation, including mapping of important features supporting participation identified through a series of comparative school visits by pupils. Where expectations of pupil as participants were raised, the need to develop pupil skills in relation to group work or mentoring

relationships was noted. A primary school had developed a framework to help pupils to develop and assess these roles and skills for themselves.

The activities in the four school case studies provided opportunities to work with pupils to produce understandings of how participation is played out in their day-to-day school experience. Pupils' visual and textual contributions were generated through pre-visit and workshop activities. The kinds of activities that pupils chose to show the research team on tours of the school reflected a broad understanding of participation that included pupil council activity but also a range of other activities, such as the school's participation in charitable fundraising, expressive arts activities, mentoring, buddying and coaching activities. Within the workshops, pupils mapped what participation looked like at each level of interaction across the school, from one-to-one encounters, to classroom and school-wide activities, to the school's interaction with the local community. Pupils identified several examples at each level of interaction, as well as the qualities or characteristics of these activities. The list of activities corresponds closely to the range of activities contributed by teacher respondents to the online survey, with the exception that, for the pupils, classroom activity featured more prominently and pupil council and other school-wide activities were not described as thoroughly. At secondary level, pupils were less confident about the efficacy of participatory activities, particularly pupil councils, and raised issues about the extent and means through which respect is shown.

Barriers to the development of participation

Given the dominant understanding of participation as largely concerned with consultations in addition to the core day-to-day activities of schools, it is understandable that a majority of respondents were either 'unsure' or felt that the *'time available to implement pupil participation'* was a 'barrier' to advancing participation in their schools (324 of 488 responses, 66%). When asked to identify other factors that pose *significant barriers to the development of pupil participation*, none of the 168 open responses addressed factors influenced by teacher behaviour. Constraints were grouped as follows: *resources* (49 responses, 29%); *pupil characteristics* including lower ability, additional support needs or pupil age/maturity (20 responses, 12%); *curriculum-related factors* (18 responses, 11%); *practical constraints* including the distance pupils had to travel to school or school bussing for extra-curricular activities (18 responses, 11%); *pupil attitudinal factors*, including pupil apathy or lack of confidence (17 responses, 10%); *assessment-related factors* i.e. accountability demands (11 responses, 6.5%); *family-related factors* including disaffected families or parental apathy (9 responses, 5%).

Advancing the participation agenda at school level

Interview transcripts from teachers in the case study schools revealed a belief that for pupil participation to be enhanced many staff need to critically evaluate their approaches to teaching and learning. Pupil participation was positioned as part of an attempt to move away from transmission-based and assessment-driven approaches to teaching and learning towards active and enquiry-based learning. All of the senior managers interviewed associated participation with developments in pedagogy and

the need to provide learning experiences that were relevant, authentic and that promoted a range of transferable skills and positive dispositions to learning.

> *It is asking yourself what is the purpose of education. Is it to churn out children who will be able to pass tests or it is to equip children with the skills for lifelong learning?*
>
> (Primary teacher, School A)

The senior managers in this small-scale study were conscious that some teachers identified more closely with traditional approaches to instruction and held a particular view of the teacher's role in school. It was acknowledged that some teachers in school found the promotion of higher levels of pupil participation unsettling.

> *Some teachers still struggle with the idea of children participating to the extent that they can and do see it as a threatening experience; one that maybe strips them of some of their power and some of the traditional respect that they feel they deserve.*
>
> (Primary headteacher, School B)

The need for change was often expressed in terms of changing assessment practices and was exemplified by the ways in which teachers were reported to be re-evaluating approaches as a result of the sustained national focus on *Assessment is for Learning*. Secondary school teachers were more likely to comment on the influence of the assessment calendar on their classroom practice and learning relationships. In accounts offered by five secondary teachers, a tension was noted between national assessments and examinations and the development of schemes of work that contained creative cross-curricular themes and associated 'project work'.

> *We have got some traditional teachers that continue to dictate what the learning is going to be. I think it's important that we start to challenge that a bit more so that we change the assessment agenda... So much of the secondary*

> *sector is very exam focused. It's trying to find time for these very important activities to happen by embedding them within the curriculum so that it's not going to be a huge extra-curricular responsibility for members of the staff and pupils.*

<div align="right">(Secondary deputy headteacher, School C)</div>

Members of the senior management team who participated in interviews during the case study visits attached importance to the need to achieve a consistent approach across the wider school to avoid the development of 'pockets' of innovation or 'silos' of good practice in particular curriculum areas or stages. In both primary schools, this was expressed in terms of the importance of ensuring continuity of experience as pupils progressed through the school. In both secondary schools, this was expressed in terms of making connections across the curriculum. Managers in the four schools emphasised the importance of affording a high profile to strategies and activities that promoted this agenda in school. The three headteachers stressed that although a number of teachers held a coordinating role, it was important that 'pupil participation' was within the designated remit of a senior member of the management team.

From the teachers' perspective, policy interventions such as the development of pupil and parent councils, whilst welcome, needed to build on pre-existing frameworks, relationships and commitments to participative practice. The three headteachers emphasised that formal strategies to 'deliver' the pupil participation 'agenda' are likely to be insufficient in the absence of a participatory ethos. A secondary headteacher in a case study school asserted that, *'The pupil council is the least important part of pupil participation'*. For these headteachers a commitment to pupil participation was not simply a matter of formal policy but should grow from the personal and professional commitments of the school community. Instilling a sense of self-efficacy was a recurring theme in the transcripts. A commitment to pupil

participation was aligned with an espoused commitment to the concurrent development of opportunities for distributed leadership for pupils and teachers.

> *We have tried every formal mechanism under the sun and it delivers to an extent but unless the actual underpinning ethos of the school is about freedom to raise issues, freedom to talk, freedom to challenge, then it's not going to happen... It is about trust and recognition; trust that many good ideas raised by staff, parents and the wider community are worth pursuing and celebrating. Trust that pupils and staff can, with whatever support is needed, be left to take ideas forward; and trust that everyone is genuine in the business of delivering the best for all young people and can be given the freedom to get on with it.*
>
> (Secondary headteacher, School D)

Teachers in promoted posts noted that senior management retain responsibility for setting the parameters for participation and needed to communicate these clearly to teachers, pupils and parents. This entailed offering a defensible rationale for the range of activities to be encouraged and managing pupil and teacher expectations. Interviewees were keen to stress that a participatory approach did not entail a 'letting go' of professional responsibility or professional judgement. Invitations to initiate change were interpreted by senior managers as opportunities to take 'considered' or managed risks.

> *One of the dangers is if you have not got parameters, if you have not thought it through and established fair and reasonable boundaries, then children could overstep the mark. There could be too much informality in some of the negotiations. Children need to know that there are boundaries within which they can operate.*
>
> (Primary headteacher, School B)

An example of pupil initiated and teacher-supported change was provided in the development of a cross-age peer tutoring scheme in School A. The scheme emerged through P6 pupils (aged 9-10 years) renegotiating 'golden time' (reward for good behaviour) to allow them to work with P3 pupils (aged 6-7 years) each week. The

headteacher encouraged P6 pupils to develop their ideas through a structured 'challenge task'. With the support of classteachers, peer tutoring is now part of school practice.

Discussion

This research suggests a high level of involvement of pupils as participants in consultation and evaluation activities; however consultation is not the same as influence. Lumby and Coleman (2007) offer the cautionary note that values-driven leadership, validated through consultation, can work to obscure rather than address inequities in power. As Hill et al (2004:83) note,

> *'Consultation may be a means of enabling children to participate but it can also be a substitute for participation in that decisions are made without the direct involvement of children.'*

The findings from the survey raise issues of how participation is currently conceived and managed. Few of the school staff who responded to the survey associated participation with pupils exerting curricular choices or the active involvement of pupils in negotiating their own learning targets. Pupil comments in the case study schools did not contain any reference to their setting their own learning targets. The involvement of pupils appears to take place within teacher orchestrated formal opportunities, with pedagogic and curriculum decisions largely excluded, or not recognised as forms of participation. The picture of participation that emerges is invitational and often directed at activities external to the pupil experience within classrooms i.e. is directed at charitable work or national initiatives e.g. healthy schools or Eco-schools. The findings from this strand of the research suggest that

participation has yet to impact on the 'instructional core' of teachers' work (Elmore, 1996), despite the supportive policy context and sustained attention to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment indicated earlier.

The place of competitions and award schemes within a framework for participation is problematic. Documentation from several schools contained examples of pupil participation in competitive schemes run by a range of bodies. In these competitions, there does not appear to be an element of peer adjudication or facilitation, limiting the degree to which participants could exercise choice or develop a comparative awareness of the objectives such projects are intended to meet. This is one example of the tensions between a model of participation that aims to provide opportunities for pupils to make decisions and a model in which participation incorporates pupils into an existing framework that has largely been set by adults.

Tensions are evident between participation activities that largely ask pupils to engage in acts of self-regulation and participation activities that invite self-expression or self-determination. Participation as education for active citizenship involves negotiation between citizenship as a duty and citizenship as an opportunity. The conceptions of participation within this study suggest teacher understandings of pupils as 'citizens in waiting'. There are difficulties with professional understandings of participation as an 'opt in' exercise or an option to be implemented in only a few areas of school life with a selection of pupils. In one of our case study schools, pupil participation was consigned to the interests and enthusiasm of a few departments within the school and, as such, was marginalised and dependent upon the commitment of these departments. The work undertaken by teachers and pupils within these departments was

commendable but was not part of a coordinated approach. Moreover, there was little evidence that this work was particularly valued by senior staff. Opportunities for participation that are championed by individual teachers are vulnerable to staff turnover and necessarily limited. An alternative, more demanding approach - suggested in three of the case study schools – involves performing constant 'culture work' to embed participation as an enduring aspect of organisational functioning and collective identity (Fielding, 2001, 2007; Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007).

The disconnect between the established literature on leadership and schools as 'learning organisations' one the one hand, and work on 'pupil voice' and rights on the other, contributes to the faltering progress of the pupil participation agenda. There is a growing body of literature that highlights the need to avoid the co-option of pupil voice in forms of 'managed professionalism' (Whitty, 2006), or its 'confinement' in 'curriculum projects and elite forms of student leadership' (Thomson and Holdsworth, 2003:372). The implementation of top-down participation initiatives (often conceived in terms of 'projects' or 'events') is somewhat paradoxical. Critics challenge the claim that the resurgence of interest in pupil voice represents an authentic vehicle for student contributions to school improvement. Indeed, it could be suggested that pupil voice has been subject to processes of 'incorporation' (Rose, 1996, 1999).

Pupil contributions during the case study school visits suggest that pupils and teachers order participation activities differently. Accounts offered by pupils consistently draw attention to the activities and negotiations within classrooms that make up the bulk of pupils' school experience. That pupils are not as readily articulate about formal

opportunities, such as pupil councils, suggests that these areas of participation need further development to provide a more balanced experience of participation.

There are tensions between the aspirations of 'democratic localism' (Bryk et al, 2010) in education and established relations of 'linearity and control' (MacDonald, 2003), especially in secondary schooling. Maitles and Gilchrist (2006:68), among others, have commented on *'the fundamentally undemocratic, indeed authoritarian, structure of the typical Scottish secondary school, where many teachers, never mind pupils, feel that they have very little real say in the running of the school'*. Organisational constraints on the enactment of participation ought not to be under-estimated.

Conclusion

The circulation of multiple discourses and opposing modalities present a confounding mix for many school professionals and this is evident in the data presented in this study. Many teachers continue to work within cultures characterised by performativity and compliance and based on economistic models of education (Ball, 2003; Gewirtz, 2002; Gleeson and Husbands, 2001). At the same time teachers negotiate counter narratives of devolved leadership, collaboration, collegiality, creativity and professional autonomy. Developments in curriculum and pedagogy expound the virtues of personalisation, choice, active and enquiry-based learning for the knowledge society. Within contemporary policy discourse, the 'good teacher' and learner are constructed as self-regulating and self-evaluating (Fenwick, 2003). Models of engagement premised on notions of civic responsibility can lead to an experience

of citizenship as heavy on duty and light on opportunity. The tensions and apparent contradictions within this policy mix provide few clear guides for collective professional action.

The survey findings of this research indicate that a significant proportion of the profession regard pupil participation as *external* to the core processes of classroom-based teaching and learning. (In contrast, pupils offered the most description of this level or arena of participation where they spend the majority of their time). If this is reflected among the teaching population, then progress in participation will continue to be piecemeal. If the 'problem' of participation is primarily perceived as one of external resource, then 'solutions' seem unlikely in times of constraint and limited in terms of influence on day-to-day practice. If participation is seen as fundamental to the relational dynamics of teaching and learning, as posited by the majority of leaders in the case study schools, then different strategies are suggested. The case study evidence presented here suggests that enhanced pupil participation requires not just strong leadership but particular forms of leadership directed to particular goals - pedagogical leadership from senior staff and embedded opportunities for teacher leadership and pupil leadership within community-engaged school cultures. Such developments are integral to the wider social exclusion policy agenda.

However, this would entail stronger connections between 'transformational leadership' (Leithwood, 1994) and models of 'transformative professionalism' (Sachs, 2003) than are currently evident in many Scottish schools. Cooper (2009) describes 'transformational leadership' as a process whereby *leaders use their positional power to promote democracy, redress inequities and empower stakeholders, including*

marginalised students and families' (p.696-7). Such analyses resonate with Sachs (2003) depiction of teaching as an 'activist' profession and Glatter's (2009:232) advocacy of 'user-centred leadership' which involves *'co-design of school learning processes with parents, young people and others such as employers'*. Advancing the participation agenda in Scotland's schools requires serious engagement with the notion of 'deliberative democracy' (Englund, 2000, 2006; Enslin et al, 2001). Deliberation might then usefully focus on possibilities for the 'co-construction' of change in education (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 1998). From this perspective, pupil and teacher agency is brought to the foreground and both are positioned as 'co-contributors' to curriculum, teaching and learning (Roberts and Bolstad, 2010). A greater understanding of partnership in framing learning relations might shift the balance between the majority of teachers who currently see participation primarily in terms of periodic consultation (75% of survey respondents) and the minority who position pupils as able contributors to curricular choices (under 2%) and school decisions (13%).

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