

Ethical education: a children's rights perspective

Professor Lundy
Centre for Children's Rights
Queen's University Belfast

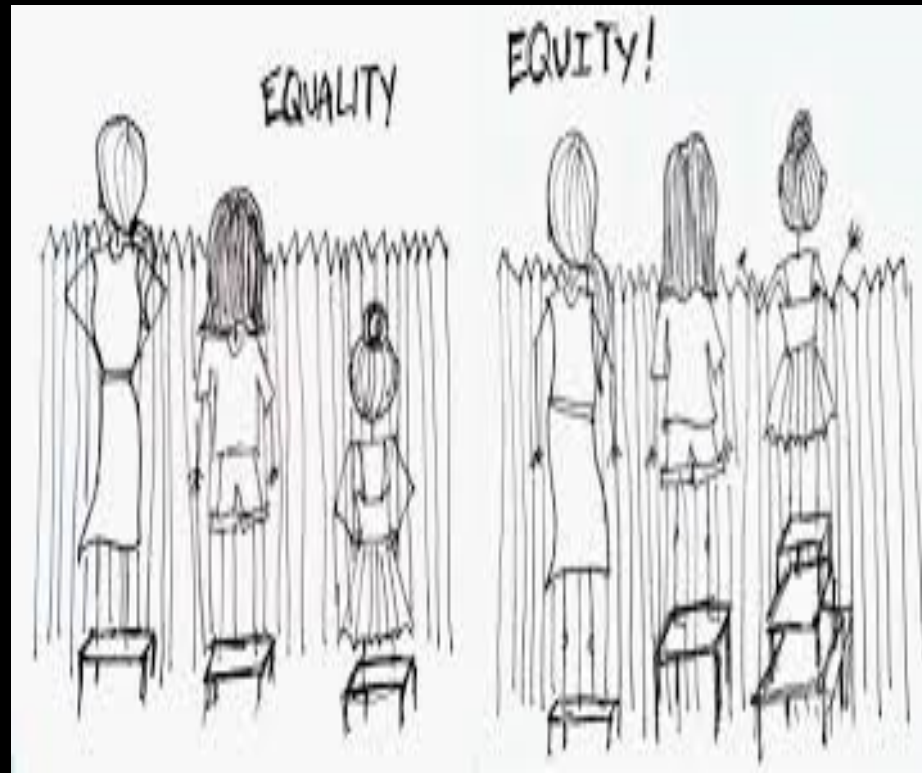
From equitable to ethical...



Education through equity at Massey University, New Zealand



Equity isn't the same as equality...
Or is it? And how does that differ from
ethical?



What is an “*ethical*” education
from a children’s rights
perspective?

Global Blueprint for The Aims of Education

Article 29 UNCRC

- (a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;*
- (b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;*
- (c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;*
- (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;*
- (e) The development of respect for the natural environment.*

Written by adults for children

The 1989 Convention was not formulated by children. Nor did they have any real input into it. How different a convention in which the child's voice is heard would look is a matter of some controversy. There is, though, not a little irony in having a Convention which emphasises participatory rights (in Article 12) whilst foreclosing the participation of children in the formulation of the rights encoded.

(Professor Michael Freeman, 2000)



What If children had been involved in writing the UNCRC?

- Looked at Article 29 - a right which is important to and should be understood by children.
- A collaboration with international scholars with expertise in children's rights and participatory approaches to research with children, including:

Northern Ireland: Laura Lundy and Elizabeth Welty, Queen's, Belfast

New York: Lacey Elizabeth Peters, City University New York.

Montreal: Natasha Blanchet-Cohen, Concordia University

Dublin: Dymphna Devine, University College Dublin

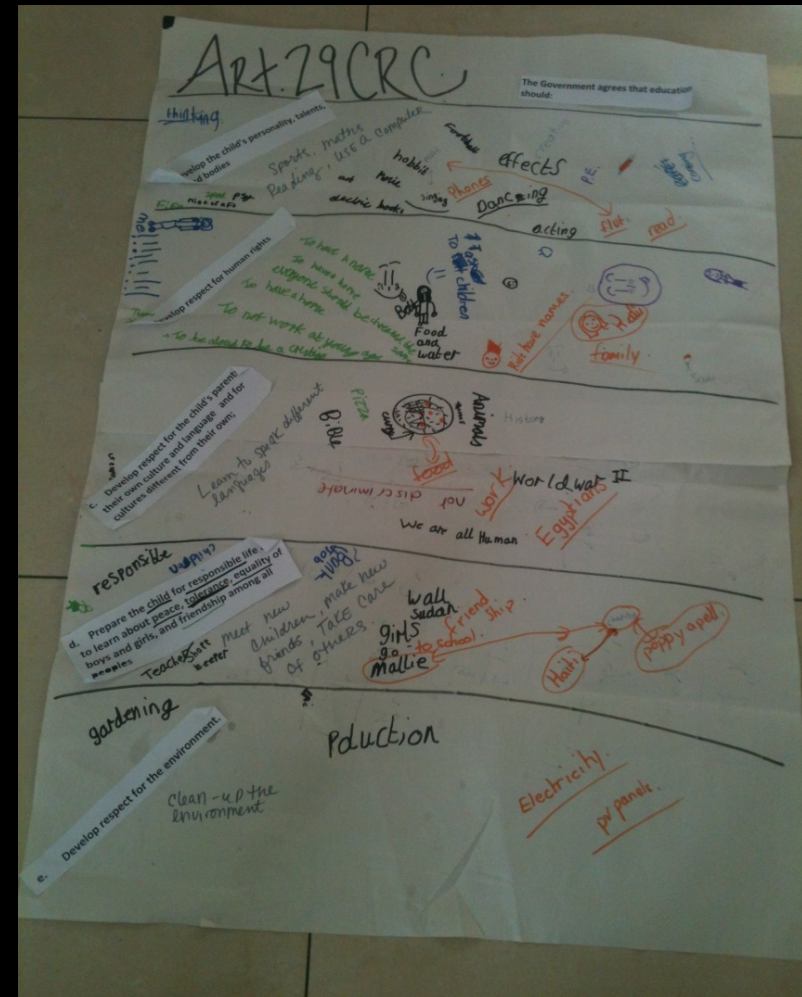
Phoenix: Elizabeth Swadener, Arizona State University

Melbourne: Kylie Smith, University of Melbourne

A child-authored adaptation

The Government agrees that education should:

- A. Develop the child's personality, talents, mind and bodies
- B. Develop respect for human rights
- C. Develop respect for the child's parents, their own culture and language and for cultures different from their own;
- D. Prepare the child for responsible life and to learn about peace, **tolerance**, equality of boys and girls, and friendship among all peoples
- E. Develop respect for the environment.



'Tolerance' wasn't seen to be very positive.

School should teach children how to **be caring**:

'when we're adults we will have to care for our own children'

"Children should learn to support charities that help people who need it".

"To help the needy. And know how to help people that are sick"

Hygge for schools?

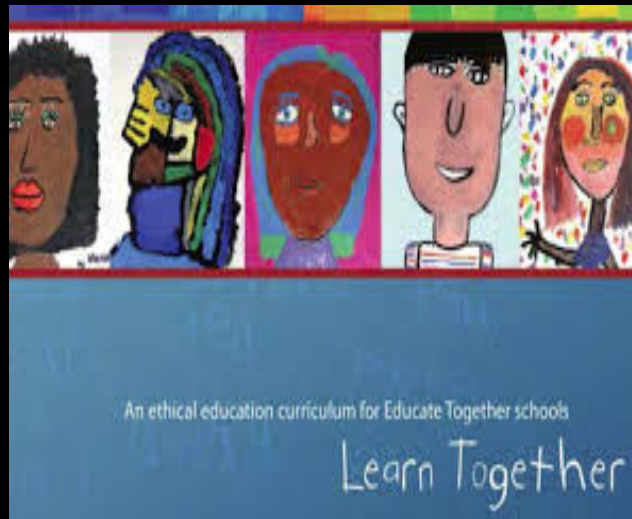
Why the Danish are the happiest nation.



What is a child rights-respecting curriculum?

child-centred, child-friendly and empowering.
... The goal is to empower the child by developing his or her skills, learning and other capacities, human dignity, self-esteem and self-confidence.

Here's one!



Aims of the programme

A knowledge and understanding of different value systems in an atmosphere of critical enquiry and mutual respect

Issues of human rights, justice and equality

An ethical and reasoned approach to caring for the environment

A range of dispositions and skills to enable them to participate in and contribute to the democratic process

The Educate Together Charter

- Recalling Art. 26 of the UDHR – *Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.*
- Art. 42.4 of the Constitution of Ireland

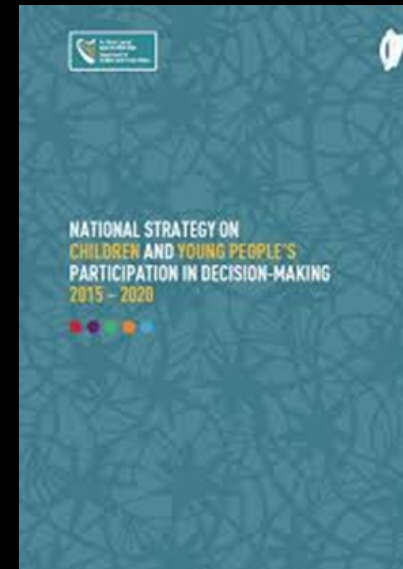
Ethical education in a modern Ireland

The Constitutional amendment on children's rights

Article 42A

The State recognises and affirms the natural and imprescriptible rights of all children and shall, as far as practicable, by its laws protect and vindicate those rights.

National Strategy on Child Participation (2015)



Children's right to participate in decision-making

“States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child,

the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”

Article 12 of the UNCRC

Article what?

- The Voice of the Child/Pupil?
- The Right to be Heard?
- The Right to Participate/ be Involved in Decision-Making?
- The Right to be Consulted?
- The Right to Have a Say?

“While these provide a convenient shorthand which helps to avoid the use of Article 12’s long-winded and somewhat awkward construction ... each has the potential to diminish its impact as they convey an imperfect summary of what it requires”.

Lundy 2007

“Voice” is not enough

- **SPACE:** Children must be given the opportunity to express a view on all matters affecting them
- **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.

The Irish National Children's Participation Strategy (2015)

Space

HOW: Provide a safe and inclusive space for children to express their views

- Have children's views been actively sought?
- Was there a safe space in which children can express themselves freely?
- Have steps been taken to ensure that all children can take part?

Voice

HOW: Provide appropriate information and facilitate the expression of children's views

- Have children been given the information they need to form a view?
- Do children know that they do not have to take part?
- Have children been given a range of options as to how they might choose to express themselves?

Audience

HOW: Ensure that children's views are communicated to someone with the responsibility to listen

- Is there a process for communicating children's views?
- Do children know who their views are being communicated to?
- Does that person/body have the power to make decisions?

Influence

HOW: Ensure that children's views are taken seriously and acted upon, where appropriate

- Were the children's views considered by those with the power to effect change?
- Are there procedures in place that ensure that the children's views have been taken seriously?
- Have the children and young people been provided with feedback explaining the reasons for decisions taken?

Participation in educational decision-making: “authorising” student voice

There is something fundamentally amiss about building and rebuilding an entire system without consulting at any point those it is ostensibly designed to serve'

Because of who they are, what they know, and how they are positioned, students must be recognized as having knowledge essential to the development of sound educational policies and practices.

– Alison Cook-Sather (2002)

The backlash



Banal?



Arbitrary?

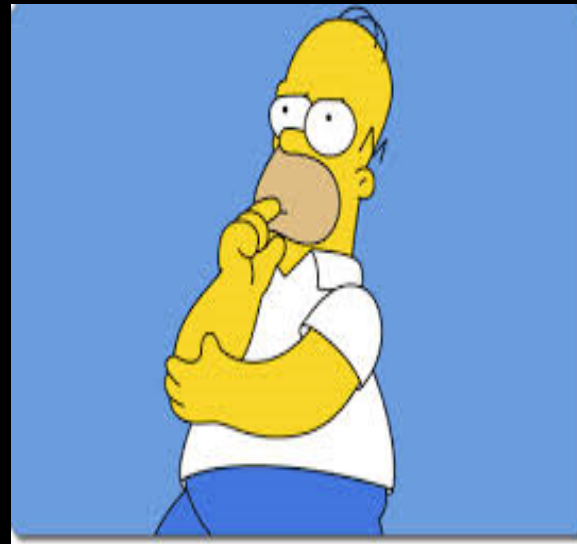
"I really don't see the point in them making a textbook, everyone learning from it for six months, and then presenting an exam paper with most questions completely unrelated to any of it!!!"



Shallow?



Choose one?



Empowerment as a threat to teacher authority?



Instead...

Can't be imposed but needs to be understood for it to be embraced by educationalists in every sphere.

Coercion, Persuasion and/or Acculturation

(Lundy, *Oxford Review of Education*, 2012)



Co-designing Individual Education Plans

Planning the IEP

- The IEP team includes the child, the parents/caregivers (with advocate if required), the classroom teacher and other teachers and special needs assistants working with the child, other relevant professionals.
- Appropriate training materials are developed to enable children with asd to participate in the IEP process.
- All IEP team members receive a copy of the IEP.



Dr Anita
Prunty

Designing Primary School Councils

- **Dr Helen Brown**, principal of Carrowdore Primary School in Co Down
- Developed and evaluated a school council, working with a team of Primary 5 children.



Engaging in Whole School Evaluations

- Dr Suzanne Conneely,
Inspectorate, Department of
Education and Skills
- Doctoral study involved working
with primary school children to
identify better ways to engage
with children's views during the
whole school evaluation process.



Participation is a dialogue and not a delegation of authority

- Not a zero sum gain where decision-making is handed over to children.
- It means including children in the discussions and giving their views “due weight”.

“What % child rights person are you?”

Professor John Tobin,
University of Melbourne



How far would you go?

Children are consulted on aspects of the curriculum

Children can choose to stay in religious education classes even though a parent has requested a withdrawal.

Governance?

There is a school council

The school council has its own budget

Children are represented on the governing body of the school

Feedback on teaching?

Children get to contribute
to teacher appointments

Children are asked to
evaluate the teaching that
they receive

Dewey: Democracy and education

In an autocratically managed society, it is often a conscious object to prevent the development of freedom and responsibility; a few do the planning and ordering, the others follow directions and are deliberately confined to narrow and prescribed channels of endeavor.”

Raising children's voices... through respect for their rights

Rights-respecting approaches position students as partners in the educational project, affording them their right to contribute to and actively participate in their own and others' learning and the realization of their potential.

Lundy and Cook Sather 2016

Ethical education and children's participation

If an ethical education (one that promotes democracy, human rights, equality and respect for difference) is to be meaningful in education, **we need to *not just seek but value ALL children's views*** on the matters that affect them in school.

Participation as a human right...

“... not an option which is in the gift of adults/policy makers but a legal obligation which is the right of the child” Lundy, 2007

Without rights the excluded can make requests, they can beg or implore, they can be troublesome; they can rely on what has been called noblesse oblige, or on others being charitable, generous, kind, co-operative or even intelligently fore-sighted. But they cannot demand for there is no entitlement (Michael Freeman, 2007).