

'Research' / 'Participation: the blurring of concepts in working with young people

Six degrees of participation session

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National Children's Bureau, 10 December 2019

Outline of presentation

- NCB's approach to participation
- Self-selection into the research process
- Inclusion and exclusion in the decision-making process
- Experts by experience and the lived experience
- Ethics and the blurring of lines
- Relationship between research and policy
- Expectation management
- Co-production (theory and practice)
- Commodification of the research process

The NCB 'Family'

United for
a Better
Childhood

Health and Participation (Council for Disabled Children – CDC)

Social Care - CDC

Early Years

Education

Research & Policy (All-Party Parliamentary Group for Children)

Information Advice & Support Programme (CDC)

Anti-Bullying Alliance

Sex Education Forum

Lambeth Early Action Partnership (LEAP)

Childhood Bereavement Network

NCB's approach to participation

- Young NCB and Young NCB advisory members
- **F**riendship, **L**earning, **A**chieve, **R**each and **E**mpower (FLARE - 16 x 13-25-year-olds)
- **Y**oung **R**esearch **A**dvisors (60 x 7-25-year-olds)

- **F**amily **R**esearch **A**dvisory **G**roup (FRAG)

Partnerships with UCL's Child Policy Research Unit, KCL, University of Bristol, University of Roehampton, Manchester Metropolitan University, Cambridge University, University of Kent, DfE, British Academy, Trusts and Foundations

Self-selection into the research process

Who participates?

Who do 'we' want to participate?

Who is it benefitting?

➤ Wide recruitment strategies

➤ Diversity of what is on offer

Inclusion & exclusion (decision-making)

Form of participation - balancing the needs of participants

The 'chocolate box' analogy

When does the 'research bit' finish?

Who are the decision-makers?

- Encourage commissioners to think more widely about the participatory process at ALL stages

Experts by experience and the lived experience

Question of 'authenticity'

Vehicle to enable articulation of anger associated with negative experience

Dangers of assumptions

- Don't assume that an experience defines the individual
- Acknowledge the heterogeneity of experiences
- Allow space for both articulation of emotion and opportunities for meaningful action

Ethics and blurring of lines

‘Research’? ‘Participation’? Responsibility management?

Impact of the project – is it going to have one?

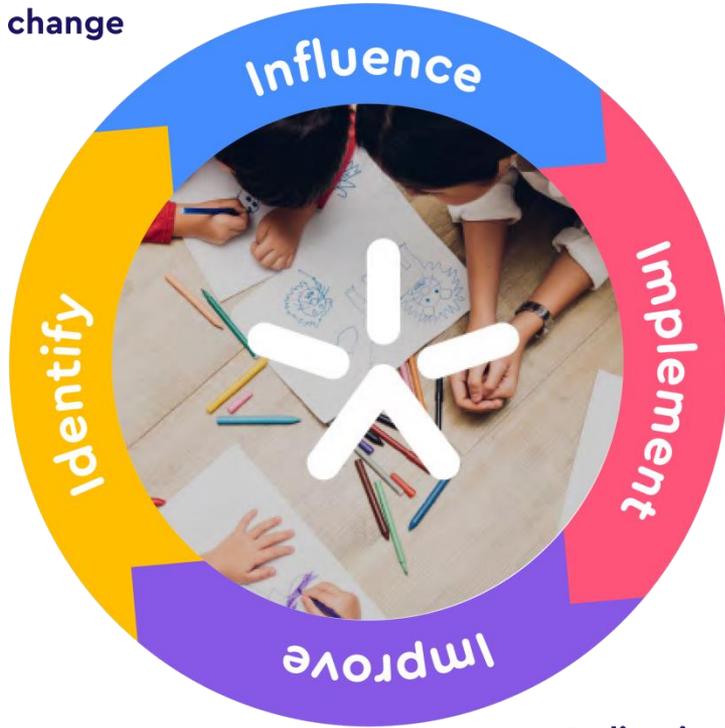
What about when it’s not a ‘project’?

Formal ethical process? Mechanisms for this?

➤ Governance process / structure (orgs/charities with more infrastructure to offer a quid pro quo arrangement)

➤ Be honest/realistic about opportunities for change

Driving
change



Relationship between research and policy

Delivering
change

Relationship between research & policy

Where does the process start? Linear or cyclical?

Skill set of team - evidence specialists?
Subject specialists? Influencers?

- Be open and honest about the role of policy (i.e. which comes first?)
- Consider the best way of making the research methods fit with the policy timescales

Expectation management



Co-production (theory and practice)

Products / outputs which have been ‘co-produced’?

How realistic / feasible is this within the timescale and budget?

Blank slate or starter for 10?

- More detail provided as part of methodology
- Greater acknowledgement / unpicking of the coproduction process

Commodification of the research process

The concept of ‘value-for money’ and the ‘purchase’ of a product (and impact upon expectations)

- Make it clear what the commissioner’s money is paying for
- Make explicit the balance between fair payment for a participant’s time vs expectations around a ‘purchase’

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