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To what extent are young people in Wales able to access their rights within education, as contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?

Student Name: Rachel Kathleen Penman

Submitted to the University of Wales in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Philosophy

Swansea University

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## THESIS SUMMARY

Candidate's Surname / Family Name: Penman

Candidate's Forenames: Rachel Kathleen

Candidate for the Degree of: MPhil

Full title of thesis: To what extent are young people in Wales able to access their rights within education, as contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?

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### **Summary:**

This thesis explores the extent to which young people in Wales are able to access their rights within education, as contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The key themes of research are: bullying, teaching methods and discipline within schools.

This research was guided by the members of Funky Dragon at various stages. The research used a qualitative approach and is largely based on the use of focus groups of young people: three of which took place in 2009/10. (Funky Dragon is the children and young people's assembly for Wales).

The research demonstrates the link between young people's 'real' experiences within education, and the ability they have to access their rights effectively. It also explores the policy context within Wales, as a devolved Nation of the UK; and questions whether Wales's Government's political commitment to 'children's rights' is translated into the reality of young people's lives.

The research produced a number of findings within each of the themes of the research. General findings of the research overall are to do with the 'interdependent' nature of children's rights, and the detrimental effects that can result if access to one or more rights are denied (i.e. the denial of one right leading to the denial of another). The research also demonstrated the important role that young people have to play, not just in accessing their own rights, but allowing and enabling their peers to access theirs. Finally, the research concluded that improving young people's opportunities to have their opinions heard, has the potential to improve their access to a range of other rights.

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed ..... (candidate)

Date .....

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s).

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed ..... (candidate)

Date .....

STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed ..... (candidate)

Date .....

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## Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the extent to which young people in Wales are able to access their rights within education; in particular in relation to the themes of: bullying; teaching methods; and discipline. The need for this research derived from a research project conducted by a group of young people from *'Funky Dragon: the children and young people's assembly for Wales'*. These young people conducted research and submitted a report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the (then) Welsh Assembly Government in 2008. The research was intended to establish how well children and young people in Wales were able to access their rights; and it covered four themes: health, information, participation and education. The nature and content of this research and report are discussed in detail this thesis; however it is fair to say that in conclusion, members of the research group and others felt that the project left a number of questions unanswered; and due to its largely quantitative nature, did not provide a great level of detail or explanation about young people's lives. The research conducted for this thesis was designed using the existing, Funky Dragon research as a baseline; but was designed to be entirely original, and to seek to answer some of the more qualitative research questions which remained unanswered in any existing research in Wales.

It is important to note at this stage that this thesis was started in 2007/8, and originally submitted in September 2011. It has not been possible to ensure that all policy developments have been included right up until the date of submission; without meaning that the work would need constantly revising and rewriting during this period; therefore the policy context should be taken as 'up to date' until approximately January 2011. Therefore it is possible that there will be policies, guidance documents and strategies which are mentioned, which may have since been revised or replaced by Welsh Government. It should however be noted that the political context was up to date and contemporary at the time the research was conducted.

This thesis will include an exploration of Human Rights and Children's Rights. It explores some definitions of rights, and also looks at the concept of 'entitlements' (as a

term often used in policy in Wales). It also begins to explore different theories about the nature of rights, and the concept of a 'universal' right. This discussion takes place largely in the context of human rights, as the precursor to the existence of 'children's rights'. The opening chapter then focuses on the development of a specific instrument for 'children's rights' (namely the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child), and its implications in the United Kingdom, and (more specifically) in Wales. This Welsh context will include a focus on mechanisms which exist in Wales for listening to children and young people; and the role that these young people have previously played in the United Nations monitoring and reporting process.

Later the work will focus on 'education' and the role it has to play in the access which children and young people have to their rights. It will explore the development of formal education since the devolution of Welsh Government, and the value it places upon rights and entitlements. This work will also look at previous research done on the subject of children's rights in education; most crucially on the *'Our Rights Our Story'* research project (undertaken by Funky Dragon).

Most crucially for this thesis, it will focus on the qualitative research undertaken with three groups of young people on the subject of rights within a formal education setting; and in particular focussing on the themes of: bullying, teaching methods and discipline. It will detail the use of focus groups as a research method, and explain the rationale for this choice; as a method which adds meaning, detail and explanation from participants about their lives and experiences. Subsequently this work will go onto discuss the results of these focus group sessions, and detail the methods of data analysis employed to get the most from the data gathered during the three focus group sessions.

Finally, and most significantly is the discussion of findings which explores how young people's real life experiences of education impacts upon their ability to access the rights afforded to them under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). These discussions will focus upon the individual themes within the research (i.e. bullying, teaching methods and discipline); but will also consider more broadly the

potential significance of rights within education; and the potential implications for the limitation of particular rights. All of these discussions will attempt to reflect on the political and educational context and landscape of Wales, and attempt to answer the overall research question: to what extent are young people in Wales able to access their rights within education, as contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?

### **An exploration of Human Rights, and Children's Rights**

This chapter will explore what is meant by 'rights', particularly in the context of 'human rights' and 'children's rights', so as to begin to make sense of the meaning of this research and the context within which it sits. It will identify the relationship between individual rights, and consider the 'universal' nature of rights for all human beings. It will then go on to explore the difference between the defined constructs of human and children's rights, and the reality created by these distinct definitions. It will also explore the concept of 'claim rights' and 'liberty rights' (as defined by Wesley Newcombe Hohfeld). This chapter will also look at the concept of 'entitlements', and their relation to rights; particularly in the political context of Wales and the work of the devolved Welsh Assembly and Welsh Government. It will then explore the history behind an international Children's Rights instrument; namely the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and some of its content. It will also explain and explore the 'monitoring process' with which all member states of the UN (those which have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) are obliged to comply, and the important role of children and young people's voice in this process. This chapter will also introduce the work of Funky Dragon, the children and young people's assembly for Wales; as a mechanism for the accessing of rights within Wales, and the role it has to play in holding Government to account both nationally, and internationally through the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

#### Defining the Meaning of 'Rights' and 'Entitlements'

The concept of 'rights' is crucial and central to this work, and it is, therefore important to explore what this concept really means. As the research will look to quantify the extent to which young people are able to access their rights, it is imperative that the meaning of this concept is clear. In his book, *'Universal Human Rights in theory and practice'*, Jack Donnelly explains the meaning of rights in the following way:

*'To have a right to X, is to be entitled to X. It is owed to you, belongs to you in particular'*



(Page 8 , Donnelly, 2003)

Thus we can begin to understand the concept of rights, as that which a person is 'entitled to'. However, according to the dictionary definition, the word 'entitlement' implies something which is 'given' to a person or a group of people, so begs the question – which people decide who should be 'given' which rights?

Donnelly also goes on to explore human rights as 'entitlements' which are '*universal ,indivisible and interdependent and interrelated*' (page 23). He explains that for as long as one is human, they have equal claim to their human rights; and although the access to enjoyment and fulfilment of these rights may not always be equal, the right remains nevertheless.

*'Human rights are equal rights: one either is or is not a human being, and therefore has the same human rights as everyone else (or not at all). ... They are also inalienable rights: one cannot stop being human, no matter how badly one behaves nor how barbarously one is treated.'*

(Page 10, Donnelly 2003)

Finally Donnelly goes on to discuss the nature of human rights as an '*interdependent and indivisible whole*', and states clearly that it is not acceptable for governments (or others) to freely select (or not) from the list of rights as though it were a 'menu' (page 23). The removal or limitation of one right will undoubtedly have an effect and implication on the access to another right – such is the interrelation between rights. This poses a conundrum in the provision of access to rights from governments; as some rights are enshrined in law and others not.

This concept is explored further by David Archard (2004), who identifies two categories: moral and legal; and highlights that the two are not always in keeping with each other. Just because a person has the right to something, morally speaking, does not necessarily mean that this right is in any way enshrined in law or policy. Archard then

goes on to explore the difficulties in ascertaining whether something is, or isn't a 'moral right', as

*'...it is not a factual matter. Rather, it is a question of moral argument as to whether or not individuals ought to have the right in question.'*

*(Archard, 2004, page 54)*

Therefore, the rights most easily defined and quantified are those which appear in law, policy or conventions of some kind. These rights have been identified and agreed upon by the majority; therefore we can be sure of their status. It could be said that once these rights become enshrined in law, this is when they become 'entitlements'. i.e. a right which is **given** by someone to another person (in this case given the government to children and young people).

Hohfeld (cited in Halstead 2005) details different types of rights - in particular 'claim rights' and 'liberty' rights. Hohfeld considered *claim* rights as the most significant as they implicate a duty on someone to either provide or prevent something. He broke this definition down further by referring to 'positive claim rights' and 'negative claim rights'.

*'A positive claim right applies to a particular thing (ie. A good or service) which someone has a positive duty to provide... A negative claim right is one with which you have to prevent someone else interfering. e.g. one threatening your health or well being.'*

*(Page 15. Halstead, 2005)*

So, for example, we can say that in the case of positive claim rights a child has the right to receive an education; and the government has a duty to **provide** this. In the case of a negative claim right, the child has a right not to be abused by their parents, and the government has a **duty** to protect the child, and a **power** to prevent the parents from acting in this way. It is not to say that all claim rights only have implications and duties for government, but by their nature all claim rights do place a duty on someone.

'Liberty' rights are the other main category defined by Hohfeld in his 1919 work entitled *'Fundamental legal conceptions as applied in judicial reasoning: and other legal essays'*. Liberty rights are also sometimes referred to as 'privilege' rights. A liberty right can be described as a right which allows one the freedom to do something (provided it does not impinge on the rights of others, and to which there is no negative claim right which prevents one from doing this particular thing). Halstead describes liberty rights as:

*'...things you can do which are not prohibited...e.g. So no one can stop you from exercising your liberty right to dine at the Ritz.'*

*(page 16, Halstead 2005)*

However he does go on to explain that just because you are free to do something, does not necessarily indicate that you have the means or inclination to do so.

Such is the case with both human, and children's rights – both of which have gone through processes of 'formalisation', and are largely accepted worldwide (through various means such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). This does not however, mean that these rights are always upheld and undisputed. The content of such agreements is often subjective and open to interpretation. As highlighted by David Archard,

*'...those who proclaim universal rights should always be sensitive to the differences between cultures...and to the local realities of implementing rights.'*

*(Archard, 2004, page 64)*

For example, a Westernised view of childhood and views of the age of maturity differ greatly within different cultures and in different places around the world. It could be argued that it is impossible to create a robust set of 'universal' rights, which take account of cultural differences – without them becoming too general, too vague, and thus losing impact. This relates to the earlier question of entitlements as something

which is ‘given’ to a group or an individual: who identifies what rights or entitlements should be ‘given’ to whom? And is it possible to ensure that all cultures are respected and valued equally in the creation of such ‘bills’? For example, it has been suggested by David Archard (2004) that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (which will be explored further in this chapter) for example, serves to create ‘...a *Western, urban, middle-class ideal of childhood.*’

When considering the principle of ‘entitlement’ as something which is ‘given’, we begin to consider the ‘responsibilities’ which surround these rights or entitlements. For example, if a person is entitled to X, there must be a responsibility on someone to provide it, or ensure access to X. Joachim Theis (2003) sees this issue of ‘responsibility’ as central to the work and practice of human rights. He writes about two fundamental roles which are played out in this arena; these being ‘rights holder’ and ‘duty bearer’. As the name would suggest it is the ‘duty bearer’s’ responsibility to ensure that the ‘rights holder’ is able to claim their rights, and in turn it is the ‘rights holder’s’ responsibility to claim their rights from the ‘duty bearer’. In different contexts individuals may take on either role (for example, within their professional lives, within their family lives etc), or even play both roles simultaneously. As described by the ‘Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’:

*‘At the individual level, while we are entitled to our human rights, we should also respect the human rights of others.’*

*([www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org))*

That is to say that whilst claiming the rights which are due to us as individuals, we must ensure that we are not doing so at the detriment of the rights of those around us. This idea of the existence of a ‘duty bearer’ and a ‘rights holder’ can be clearly linked with Hohfeld’s description of ‘claim rights’ where (whether positive or negative), the ability of an individual (ie. The rights holder) to claim their rights is always dependant upon another (ie. The duty bearer) performing their duties.

So, a right can be said to be that which exists anyway (regardless of context or circumstance); though access to that right may be denied or violated in a number of ways, the ‘right’ itself does not cease to exist. Whereas an ‘entitlement’ exists only as something that is given explicitly, and ideally takes the existence of a right towards a point of *action* and *responsibility*.

### The Development of an International focus on Children's Rights

The formalisation of ‘Human Rights’ came far prior to that of ‘children’s rights’ (as a separate entity), and therefore formed the basis and rationale for the development of the rights of children being recognised specifically, and more appropriately. It is important to briefly explore the history of human rights in this section, and their evolution over time; and ultimately their bearing and influence on the rights of children and young people.

Prior to 1945, there had been mention of human rights in various contexts, and these were specific to certain individuals or groups; for example the treaty of Berlin in 1878 protected the rights of religious and ethnic minorities. Also the League of Nations in 1919 developed the *International Labour Organisation*, to protect the rights of the workforce to fair working conditions. Certainly the concept of ‘universal human rights’ did not seem to have entered people’s consciousness yet, or have any interest at political level. There were also a number of individuals beginning to write about what we would now term as ‘human rights’ – H.G. Wells for example in his book *‘The Rights of Man: or what are we fighting for?’*, attempted to make sense of war and fighting by defining a ‘declaration of rights’, which included sections about discrimination, health, education, employment and many more. As explored earlier though, Wells’s declaration was almost entirely made up of ‘moral rights’ with no consensus of public opinion or basis in law at this stage. However, with World War II as its catalyst, 1945 saw the beginning of a process in which the countries of the United Nations worked together to write and ultimately agree upon a positive move towards ‘freedom’ for their citizens: freedom from fear, persecution and ‘want’. Whilst the intentions were positive there was also a lot of rebuilding and regrouping to be done following the end of the war, and so the

establishment of the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' was a slow process. In all it took three years of negotiations (until December 1948) for a version to be created which all nations were happy to adopt, and which they felt fairly allowed for and reflected their differing cultures and circumstances. The adoption of this declaration meant, in effect, that for the first time citizens across all member states of the UN had equality in terms of their rights; though obviously the implementation of this declaration, and the ability of individuals to access their rights continues to differ across the member states. Incidentally 1946, post World War II also saw the establishment of United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), who's remit was to assist children in the aftermath of the war, and who since have played a part in the development of the children's rights movement.

Since the development and adoption of this declaration in 1948, a number of other 'treaties' have been developed and ratified by the countries of the United Nations, in an attempt to ensure that those groups and individuals with specific needs and/or minority statuses are able to access their rights and receive particular protection from any violations of these rights. Other examples of such treaties include: *'The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women'* – which was brought into force in 1981, to ensure the equal treatment of women in all areas of life; *'The International Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities'* – which was adopted in 2006, which aims to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability, and protect those rights which are specific to this group of people. Another such Convention is *'The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child'* (UNCRC, adopted in 1989, on which this research will be based), which looks to enshrine and protect the rights of all children and young people, from birth to the age of eighteen, living in the member states.

There is some debate about whether it is necessary to have children's rights in existence, as a separate entity to human rights; or about whether this actually devalues the rights and status of children and young people by denying them the equity which might come with being included in the broader term of 'human', along with adults. Some would argue that we should talk about the 'human rights of children', and not 'children's rights';

as first and foremost children and young people are humans too, and that (whilst they may need additional safe guarding to some degree, due to their relative vulnerability) the very ethos of human rights is equality across the board (regardless of gender, religion, race, sexuality and age). Due to these differing views of children's rights, this section will explore the existence of formalised rights of the child, and the impact of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

One view of children's rights is that it is unnecessary to define them, and for them to exist as a separate entity to human rights. 'Human Rights' by implication refer to the rights of all humans regardless of age, thus including children and young people. Also, it could be argued that adults provide for children until they become adults themselves, and therefore their rights are largely insignificant. Holt and Farson (cited in Archard 2004) refer to the importance of children and young people having access to **all** of the rights that adults do, no matter their age. They acknowledge the different points of view which exist in this discussion, but strongly argue that to decide upon what rights an individual has or don't have, should not arbitrarily be based on age. Where some people would argue that children are not 'competent' to hold certain rights; Holt and Farson argue that competency is not dependent on age; and that it is entirely wrong to assume that children are 'incompetent' simply by virtue of being younger than adults (page 73). Archard argues that Farson and Holt's view of children as 'equal' rights holders as adults is possibly over simplified, and problematic. He uses the example that it may be acceptable to argue that children should have the right to vote, and to argue that they are capable of making an informed decision in this area. However, is it then also acceptable to argue that children should have the right to work if they wish to do so.

*'It is one thing to underestimate the capacities of children, another to reckon them equal to those of adults.'*

(Page 75, Archard, 2004)

Others argue that having and recognising children's rights separately is absolutely necessary, such as Boyden and Hudson, in their work *'Children: Rights and*

*Responsibilities*’, who believe that children’s rights are a matter of safeguarding, and that it’s precisely **because** of adults that children’s rights become more important.

*‘...in view of the distressing reality of many children’s lives that unfold in the press and courts ... there is an undeniable need to challenge adults’ attitudes towards children, and to examine problems arising from their sub- ordinance and dependence.’*

*(Boyden and Hudson, 1985, page 3)*

It can be argued that the position of children in society is, in many ways, ‘lesser’ than adults (in terms of power, status, influence, knowledge etc); therefore without clearly defined and commonly accepted rights specific to children and their lives, children are vulnerable. Most adults will have an understanding of what is and isn’t acceptable in their lives, and will have some idea about what to do if they are unhappy with their circumstances. Children will take time to learn these things, and in the mean time need protection. This learning primarily takes place within the home and family; however, in some more grave circumstances (e.g. abuse and neglect) precisely the opposite lessons are learned. Without specific rights of their own; if their rights are only claimed **for** children **by** the adults around them, these children will be even more vulnerable.

The issue of children having separate, distinct rights at all, has been disputed by many. David Archard (2004), speaks of ‘interest’ and ‘choice’ theories which exist around children’s rights. In the former, a right is the *‘protection of an important interest’*, whereas in the latter a right is the *‘protected exercise of a choice’*. This latter way of thinking leads many to conclude that children should not have rights as they are not mature enough to make informed and reasoned choices. This issue of maturity and competence is one which has no concrete conclusion, and continues to be posed in various contexts. For example, within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child itself we see Article twelve, which says that children should be involved in decisions which affect them; but that their views and opinions should only be given *‘due weight in accordance with age and maturity’*. The difficulty with placing this caveat on



children's access to rights is that we have no definitive measure of maturity and competence. This leaves the option for people to use the excuses of maturity and competence as a reason for not granting children and young people access to their rights.

### An Exploration of the Development of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - established in 1989; is the Convention which almost all nations of the world have ratified, and which is therefore the current benchmark for children and young people's rights around the world.

However, this Convention did not arise from nowhere, and in order to appreciate its content, it is vital to understand the context within which the UNCRC was written and received politically; and why it remains the most widely ratified convention of the United Nations.

Arguably the beginning of the formalisation of children's rights (as a separate entity to human rights) came way back in the 1920s, when the founder of the Save the Children organisation, Englantine Jebb, drafted five short 'rights'. These included that children should be the priority for attention during emergencies and distress; that they should be granted protection from exploitation; that they be provided for both 'spiritually and 'materially'; and that

*'...the child that is hungry must be fed; the child that is sick must be nursed; the child that is backward must be helped; the delinquent child must be reclaimed; and the orphan and the waif must be sheltered and succoured.'*

*(League of Nations, 1924)*

These rights were then adopted by the League of Nations in 1924, and called the 'Geneva Declaration of Children's Rights', which was clearly a significant step. However the content of Jebb's rights was brief and its format as a 'declaration' (whilst demonstrative of some good intentions) had no legal standing to ensure its implementation.

Following the inception of the ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’ in 1948, further work was done to safeguard the rights of the child, and 1959 saw the publication of the ‘*Declaration on the Rights of the Child*’ – which recognised the necessity of committing to a separate, more detailed bill of rights with regard to children; who

*‘...by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection before, as well as after birth.’*

*(United Nations, 1959)*

The commitment to children’s rights, and the impetus behind the movement was certainly growing with the declaration in 1959. The Declaration in 1959 is demonstrative of a greater commitment and understanding of children as ‘rights holders’, distinct from adults. The content of the declaration is much more detailed and considered than Jebb’s earlier effort. It includes the principles of equality of opportunity, non discrimination and the best interests of the child; all of which are still paramount to the children’s rights movement to date. It also includes a ‘principle’ (there are ten in total) on education (which was not mentioned in the Geneva declaration of 1924).

*‘The child is entitled to receive education, which shall be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary stages. He shall be given an education which will promote his general culture and enable him, on a basis of equal opportunity, to develop his abilities, his individual judgement, and his sense of moral and social responsibility and to become a useful member of society.’*

*(United Nations, 1959)*

This declaration also sees children acknowledged for the first time as ‘citizens’, which is significant in terms of children being recognised as having an importance alongside adults, and an access to civil rights and liberties in the way that adults do.

However, the declaration still had little bearing on law and policy; therefore it did not have the necessary powers to call governments (and others) to task for violation of the rights within it, or even to be monitored in terms of its implementation. Therefore twenty years later, in 1979, work began (at UN level) on turning the 'declaration' into a more practical, detailed 'Convention' which would outline a number of clear obligations on those Nations choosing to ratify it.

The creation of the '*United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*' (UNCRC) was neither a simple, nor a swift process. It began during the *International Year of the Child* (1979), when Poland put forward a proposal for a children's rights instrument which was more enforceable and accountable than the existing 1959 declaration. The initial draft of this document was written by representatives from Poland; but was judged to need more work by other nations of the UN, and so a working group was formed (under the UN commission for Human Rights) to redraft the Convention. Whilst the agreed desire was to reflect the principles and ethos of the previous two declarations; the necessary content of a more detailed, quantifiable and practical 'Convention' took a little longer to negotiate; as the member states debated the content, and the commitments they would be making within a more accountable convention of rights, which would be monitored closely. This was a long process, taking some ten years in total, with NGO's (i.e. non governmental organisations) at times having to pressurise and influence governments so as to progress this work further. However, finally in 1989 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was formally adopted and published by the United Nations, with all but two of the world's countries being signed up to it (with Somalia and USA being the exceptions).

### The Content of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The fifty-four articles contained in the UNCRC can be divided into two sections: the 'substantive articles' and the 'monitoring articles'. Articles one to forty one (substantive) outline the actual rights of children and young people, up to and including the age of eighteen. The 'monitoring' articles outline the ways in which the implementation of this Convention will be monitored in each of the nations and at UN

level by a committee of UN representatives. For example, Article forty-four of the UNCRC states that:

*'State parties undertake to submit to the Committee ... reports on measures they have adopted which give effect to the rights recognised herein and on the progress made on the enjoyment of those rights.'*

*(United Nations, 1989. Article 44(1))*

The content of the substantive articles has been subdivided in various ways over the years, in an attempt to categorise and make more sense of them. One such division is known as 'the three p's', namely *'provision'*, *'protection'* and *'participation'* (this categorisation is now commonly used by children's rights organisations and academics around the world). The *'provision'* rights refer to those rights enshrined in the UNCRC which are aimed at ensuring all children and young people are provided with certain services (such as education), and that there is a universally acceptable standard and ethos to such services. The *'protection'* articles are those rights which refer to the child's right to be protected from certain harmful activities (such as neglect or abuse), and these are very much to do with a child's right to survival and safety. Finally the *'participation'* rights are those which refer not only to the child's right to participate in certain activities (for example, the right to 'peaceful assembly' with friends), but also refer to the child's right to have their views taken into account, and their opinions listened to. Although this categorisation is useful in gaining a better understanding of the content of the UNCRC, many, including Nigel Cantwell (1997), warn against the strict division of these rights, and stress that they should not be seen as separate measures, but rather as *'...three elements to be necessarily taken into account in formulating policies on any issue.'*

Regardless of opinion on its content, it cannot be disputed that the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has seen the most robust and 'legally binding' commitment to the rights of children to date at international level. Whilst not automatically law in and of itself, all states formally committed to the UNCRC must commit to including the principles and values of this convention in domestic law, and to

bringing existing legislation into line with the principles of this Convention. In many states, the UNCRC has been taken on board at national level, and adopted as law; however, in the United Kingdom, this (unfortunately) is not so simple; as this thesis will explore.

### Monitoring the Effectiveness of the UNCRC in Practice

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is a body set in place to ensure close monitoring and evaluation of the reality of children's rights around the world. In ratifying the UNCRC, all Nations agree to a process of monitoring, reporting and feeding back to this committee (as detailed in Articles forty two to fifty four of the UNCRC itself). There is a constant program of reporting, which involves governments having to submit a report two years after first ratifying the UNCRC, and then every five years after this. Along with the submission of a report by governments, it is also expected that a report will be submitted by one, or a coalition of, non-governmental organisations (NGO's) from the country in question. The purpose of this second report is to attempt to give the members of the Committee a fuller picture of the reality of life for children and young people, and to ensure that the government are not able to 'gloss over' any issues, and are thoroughly held to account. It is also becoming increasingly common for a third report to be submitted by 'children and young people's ombudsman' or Children's Commissioners (as we have in Wales). Finally, there is the opportunity for children and young people themselves to submit reports to the UN Committee about their experiences of life within the country in question, and the extent to which they are able to access their rights. These reports and/or evidence from children and young people are often coordinated by one or more children and young people's organisations. This is an opportunity which is not largely exploited, although there have been a number of reports submitted under the heading of 'children's report'. For example, in Japan five young people submitted written essays which described their lives; and in Germany, a questionnaire was answered by ten thousand children and young people, with the findings presented to the UN Committee.

The fact that the United Kingdom is made up of four devolved Nations is not formally recognised, or accommodated by the United Nations; therefore reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (and indeed any UN body) must be made on behalf of the entire United Kingdom. The practical implications of this are that Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England must coordinate their research and report writing in order to submit one report, and also that any feedback from the Committee comes to the 'UK Government' and must be disseminated accordingly. It is very rare (though not unheard of) for this feedback to be written with particular reference to any one of the four nations of the UK by name. This can be problematic in terms of holding governments accountable; as it can be all too easy for governments to 'assume' or 'pretend' the feedback and recommendations must be directed elsewhere within the UK. For example, in the United Nations Committee's Concluding Observations in 2008, the Committee refer to concerns they have regarding 'Dissemination, Training and Awareness Raising' (on the UNCRC). It states that:

*' 20. The Committee welcomes the State party's recent efforts to train professionals on the principles and provisions of international human rights instruments, including the Convention, as well as its support to UNICEF "Rights Respecting Schools" project and the collaboration with NGOs in the development and implementation of awareness-raising activities. Nonetheless, the Committee is concerned that there is no systematic awareness raising of the Convention and that the level of knowledge about it among children, parents or professionals working with children is low. Furthermore, the Committee regrets that the Convention is not part of the curriculum in schools.'*

(Point 20. Page 5. United Nations. 2008)

As education is a devolved matter in the United Kingdom, this concern appears to be aimed at all four governments. However, there is no recognition at all within the text that the awareness and training around the UNCRC may be at (even slightly) different stages within each Nation. For example, in September 2008, Welsh Assembly Government

produced and circulated new guidance for *Personal Social Education* in schools, which makes reference to the UNCRC. Therefore Welsh Ministers and officials may read the UN Concluding Observations and make the assumption that it is largely made in reference to the other three Nations. The reality could be that the Committee *is* including Wales in its recommendation, as it does not feel the creation of 'guidance' presents a strong enough basis for the UNCRC in schools.

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The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child is made up of eighteen individual 'experts' at any given time. These individuals should be professionals (including retired professionals) with some 'specialism' or experience in the area of human rights, and will serve a term of four years on the committee in total.

*'43.2. The Committee shall consist of eighteen experts of high moral standing and recognized competence in the field covered by this Convention. 3. The members of the Committee shall be elected by States Parties from among their nationals and shall serve in their personal capacity, consideration being given to equitable geographical distribution, as well as to the principal legal systems.'*

*(United Nations, 1989. Article (43)(2) )*

The Committee usually convenes three times per year (known as 'sessions'). Each session consists of four weeks worth of work for the Committee, and the reporting schedule for each of the ratifying nations will be in line with the 'sessions' of the Committee. Following the submission of written reports from government; NGO's; ombudsman; and children and young people; the latter three (i.e. all but government) are invited to make presentations directly to the UN Committee in Geneva. Here they can present the main findings, or priorities of their research and evidence, and the Committee members will ask further questions or seek clarifications on the evidence they have seen. After this, for most Nations, a member of the committee known as a 'rapporteur' will visit the nation (hosted by NGO's in most instances), and view some of the evidence 'in practice', so that they may give feedback to other members of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Personal Social Education (PSE)* is taught in schools in Wales. In England this is referred to as *Personal Social Health Education (PSHE)*

Committee upon their return. Only once these parts of the process have been completed, does the government have the opportunity to meet directly with the members of the Committee. At this hearing the government representatives will present evidence from their own report and will also be questioned by the Committee about the evidence they have heard from NGO's, children and young people, and ombudsman (presuming all have submitted reports). Once this final hearing is complete the Committee members will meet to discuss their thoughts and conclusions, and produce a list of observations and recommendations for the government of the Nation in question. These are known as 'concluding observations'. Five years later the process will be repeated with the UN paying particular interest to the areas which they had made recommendations on in the previous round of reporting.

The last time the UK government reported to the UN committee was in 2002, and then again in 2008 (one year later than the allotted five years, due to a backlog of reporting for the Committee). In 2002, the Committee on the Rights of the Child returned a mixed response of conclusions and recommendations ( '*concluding observations*' ) to the UK government, based on the evidence they had heard. The Committee applauded some steps made by the governments of the UK; these included the abolition of corporal punishment within all schools across the United Kingdom, and in all forms of child care in Wales. However, in this particular instance (as seems common with most of the conclusions within the 2002 report) the Committee felt that the government had not gone far enough in this area to ensure that children and young people's rights are protected. They suggested that government's benchmark of acceptable corporal punishment within the family (that is 'reasonable chastisement') was completely detrimental to children's rights and the principles of the Convention, and that this 'reasonable chastisement' should be revisited by government and abolished completely. This particular recommendation is interesting as a demonstration of the lack of 'power' that the UN Committee really hold in forcing governments to take action; as some seven years later, it is still legal for parents to use '*reasonable chastisement*' in disciplining their own children. This is despite efforts from the National Assembly for Wales to gain a 'legislative competency order' in this area, allowing smacking to be banned in Wales. To date, this request from Wales has been refused by UK government



on the basis that to ban parents from ‘smacking’ their children, would have an impact on the criminal justice system – which remains a ‘non-devolved’ issue.

### The Application of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in the United Kingdom

Although UK government formally ratified the UNCRC in 1991, it is not possible for it to automatically be made UK law. This is due to the fact that the UK is a monarchist (and therefore dualist) state, meaning that for the UNCRC to become law, the Queen herself (or head of the monarchy at that time) would themselves have to ratify it. However, in committing itself to the UNCRC and formally ratifying it, the UK government has committed to creating ‘enabling legislation’; that is legislation which clearly echoes and is underpinned by, the content of the UNCRC.

Further complicating the government’s formal commitment to the UNCRC is the process of devolution which has taken place since 1999. This process has meant that in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, new policies are being written and implemented outside of UK government, and its commitment to the creation of ‘enabling legislation’. In Wales (where this research was conducted), the Welsh Assembly Government formally adopted the UNCRC in January 2004, although in reality they had been working under its guidance prior to this formal adoption. This means that all policies/guidance etc. made by the Welsh Assembly Government will be in accordance with the Convention in all dealings with children and young people, up to and including the age of eighteen.

By comparison to England (as an example), Wales’s government is forward thinking and progressive in its commitment to children and their rights. Whilst the UK government has ratified the UNCRC, and did so in 1990, English policy to date still fails to make formal reference and commitment to the rights of children and young people. The ‘*Every Child Matters*’ agenda, and the resulting ‘*Children’s Act*’ in 2004 makes reference to the UK Government providing the support so that children and young people can:

*'...be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; achieve economic well being...'*

*(Department for Education and Skills, 2004)*

Whilst this all aims at positive outcomes and lives for children and young people, it implies that the onus of responsibility lies with the children and young people themselves, in that it talks of what children and young people can do for themselves, and not what government will provide. Whilst there is undoubtedly an importance on young people being encouraged to make the most of opportunities and put in effort in order to make their way in the world; this does seem to release the government from the burden of responsibility. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is all about commitments that government make to children and young people within their jurisdiction, and each of the articles begins: *'State parties shall...'*; thus making it very clear that provision of these rights lies with government. It is not for children and young people to 'battle' to claim these rights or entitlements, but for government to openly and clearly provide them. In Wales, we see this commitment in policies such as *'Extending Entitlement'*; yet in England this commitment seems to be somewhat missing. In 2007, with the release of *'The Children's Plan: building brighter futures'* (a ten year strategic plan), the United Kingdom government set out its plans for children and young people's services within England. Within this document, there is again no reference to children's rights or entitlement, and once again there seems to be a greater onus on children and young people themselves than there is on government. For example, one of the government's goals between 2010 and 2020 (included 'The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures' is):

*'...young people participating in positive activities to develop personal and social skills promote wellbeing and reduce behaviour that puts them at risk.'*

*(Department for Children Schools and Families, 2007)*

This example fails to say what government will do to make this happen and what their responsibility will be in ensuring these positive outcomes for young people; once again the responsibility lies with young people themselves; and once again we see a policy which seems to neglect the commitments made by government under the UNCRC. It seems that in English policy, whilst government claims responsibility for providing

opportunities for young people, the onus lies with young people to claim these opportunities; indeed they may be penalised if they do not make the most of these opportunities. It is also the case that these opportunities can be taken away from young people based on 'behaviour'. In Wales we see policy which is more rights based; the responsibility lies with government to ensure that all children and young people have access to these rights, and this access cannot be taken away; it is not based on good behaviour or the condition of using opportunities provided. This type of policy is much more in line with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Development of the Children's Rights Agenda in Wales (post devolution): rhetoric or reality?

Wales is, and has been since 1999, a devolved Nation of the United Kingdom. This means that it has its own Government which has economic, educational, health, planning, transport and tourism decision making powers in Wales. Until a referendum in 2011, Wales did not have the right to create its own primary legislation. However, it was able to create 'secondary legislation' which allowed it to work within the framework of UK policy, but create systems which were particular to Wales, its situation and population. Since 2007, on matters which it felt more strongly about Welsh Government were able to apply to UK government for a 'legislative competency order', which (if granted) allows them to create their own, primary legislation. However, it was felt by many that this system was ineffective and inappropriate; as Wales technically had the ability to create its own laws, but only if the UK government agreed with the law and allowed Wales to create it. Therefore, in May 2011, a referendum was held and following that referendum, Welsh Government now has powers to create law (ie. Primary legislation) within all areas which have been devolved from UK Government.

This process of devolution has resulted in the four nations of the United Kingdom developing at varying rates, particularly within the area of education, and children and young people's rights; and evidence would suggest that Wales is (on the whole) a fairly forward thinking Nation. With the introduction of a Children's Commissioner; the

establishment of a children and young people's assembly; young people regularly involved in the appointment of Welsh Assembly Government members of staff; and the introduction of legislation which states that every school in Wales must have a student council – it would appear that Wales is a place where young people and their rights are held in extremely high regard. In 2004 (almost five years after its establishment), the Welsh Assembly Government formally and publicly adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and made a commitment that this document would be used in all future planning, policies, legislation and guidance to ensure that children and young people's rights were respected and fulfilled at every possible juncture. In reality, the government in Wales had begun committing to this Convention and the principles within it far earlier than this 2004 formal adoption.

In '*Framework for Partnership*' (2000), the Government laid out its plans to improve the development and delivery of services for children and young people, by creating a more coordinated and cohesive approach within each of the Local Authorities in Wales. The document required each Local Authority to develop a 'children and young people's framework', with a 'children's partnership' and 'young people's partnership' sitting beneath this. These partnerships would be made up of various agencies and professionals working with or for children and young people (such as social services, youth services, playgroups, the police etc.) The work of these groups would be to manage and coordinate the delivery of services within the local authority, including the allocation of centrally held funding. This document had an entire chapter dedicated to defining the context of this work within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; clearly demonstrating a commitment and attempts to transfer these values from National Government to more local structures.

*'These...children's rights...underpin the values and standards upon which policy development and service delivery in Wales needs to be based.'*

*(Welsh Assembly Government, 2000)*

In 2002 the Welsh Assembly translated the rights of children and young people into '*seven core aims*', which are intended to ensure that all children and young people:

*'have a flying start in life; have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities; enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation; have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities; are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognized; have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing; and are not disadvantaged by poverty.'*

*(Welsh Assembly Government, 2002)*

Whilst these aims are not all encompassing, they do demonstrate a desire to making children's rights a reality, and to translate them into a more practical, comprehensive format which people can refer to and utilise. In 2004, the Welsh Assembly Government looked to 'take stock' of the progress they had made since *'Framework for Partnership'* in 2002, and published *'Children and Young People: Rights to Action'*, in which they laid out achievements to date, current work, and aspirations for the future. This document (which followed their formal adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) makes explicit the links between the articles contained in the UNCRC, the 'seven core aims', and the work being done in Wales. This shows a desire and intention from government that professionals really understand the 'framework' within which they are working, and demonstrates a clear commitment to the UNCRC.

A more specific government strategy for 11-25 year olds, also published in 2000 is *'Extending Entitlement'*, which was written following a study with professionals and young people to establish how the Welsh Assembly Government could best 'support' its young people. The use of the word 'entitlement' implies a firm commitment from the government to provide something to young people universally, and so we may take *'Extending Entitlement'* as a guarantee that Welsh government will ensure that young people living in Wales will receive what they are entitled to: their rights (as laid out in the UNCRC). This document identifies ten 'basic entitlements' which every young person in Wales has. These clearly echo some of the articles on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. For example, Welsh Assembly Government says that all young people are entitled to *'be able to learn about things that interest and affect*

*you*. This clearly and directly relates to Article 28 of the UNCRC which is to do with a child's right to education and mentions specifically: *'different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education'* which is *'accessible to every child.'*

However positive the creation of these entitlements is, they are limited in terms of their scope and the amount of the UNCRC which they incorporate (to be expected when condensing fifty-four articles into ten). The entitlements are in parts, arguably, too general to provide a useful set of standards. For example, they state that young people are entitled to *'easy access in getting the best service that you should have, locally and nationally...'* However, it does not identify how these may be measured or defined. This one entitlement could be taken to include more than fifteen of the articles contained in the Convention; including those related to health services, looked after young people, education, equal opportunities and more.

Since its inception in 2000, there have been a number of pieces of work done to evaluate the effectiveness, and impact of *'Extending Entitlement'*. A pilot study was conducted in 2004, the main findings of which focused on young people's partnerships, schools, hard to reach groups and 19-25 year olds. Issues emerging from research with young people's partnerships (YPPs) were to do with lack of resources to support the work, and a need to increase the direct involvement of young people in the work of the partnership. On a more positive note, professionals highlighted the generally positive and effective working relationship which existed between Welsh Assembly Government and Local Authority partnerships. They also commented that generally they agreed with, and were committed to the principles and values of *'Extending Entitlement'* – which suggests that the policy level, legislative commitment made by government to the UNCRC is *'filtering'* through the existing structures to a more local level. Within schools, hard to reach groups and the older age group of young people, the pilot study faltered somewhat, finding difficulty accessing young people in these situations/groups; and highlighting the need to develop more innovative methods of research and evaluation. Overall, the study found that

*'The entitlement reported with the highest level of access was 'sporting activities'. The entitlement reported with the lowest levels of access was 'the opportunity to be asked what young people think and want.'*

*(Welsh Assembly Government. 2004)*

A full study into the effectiveness of 'Extending Entitlement' was completed (Haines et al, 2004), which gathered the views of five thousand, eleven to sixteen year olds across Wales; some in schools, youth offending teams, pupil referral units and other specific interest groups across the country (e.g. ethnic minority groups). The aim of this research was to evaluate young people's perceived levels of access to entitlements (as defined by extending entitlement), and the impact that this access to entitlements has on both positive and negative outcomes and experiences for young people in Wales. The research involved a questionnaire which indicated 'risk factors' and 'protective factors' i.e. the things which lead to negative and positive outcomes. The questionnaire also measured young people's 'perceived level of access to entitlements' (which the researchers called PLATE), and asked young people to measure how well they thought they were able to access the ten entitlements laid out by the Welsh Assembly Government. The research then attempted to identify links between these PLATE measurements and both positive and negative behaviours.

Whilst caution must always be used in applying the conclusions of research to entire populations; generally, this research found that young people who reported negative behaviour and outcomes were unlikely to report high level of access to entitlements (PLATE). For the purposes of this research it is important to note what was concluded about the experiences of education and entitlements: that was that negative experiences in school seemed to be associated with lower PLATE score, and more negative behaviour and outcomes. Conversely positive experiences in school were associated with higher PLATE scores. That is to say that those young people who had positive experiences of school and education, generally felt that they had much better access to their entitlements on the whole, as defined by the Welsh Assembly Government. This

echoes the work of Jack Donnelly (2003), in which he refers to the indivisible nature of rights, and the impact of one right upon another as being hugely significant.

*'The Universal Declaration model treats internationally recognized human rights holistically, as an indivisible structure in which the value of each right is significantly augmented by the presence of many others.'*

*(Page 27, Donnelly, 2003)*

This demonstrates the important and significant role formal education and school has to play in the access of entitlements and rights for young people living in Wales.

A further demonstration of Wales's commitment to the UNCRC comes in the fact that Wales was the first nation of the United Kingdom to have a Children's Commissioner, who acts as an 'ombudsman' for children, young people and protects their rights. Even prior to devolution in 1999, there had been calls across Wales for such a post to exist (largely from non governmental organisation - NGO's working with children and young people), in order that children and young people's rights could be protected, to ensure their safe guarding and positive experiences in life. The year 2000 saw the publication of the 'Waterhouse report' into child abuse cases of children living in care in North Wales. This report called for the introduction of a Commissioner for children and young people, as one of the possible steps towards ensuring that such huge rights violations did not happen again in Wales, and even went as far as to recommend some of the duties that this post should hold.

*'...ensuring that children's rights are respected through the monitoring and oversight of the operation of complaints and whistle blowing procedures and the arrangements for children's advocacy...'*

*(Waterhouse, 2000)*

This report which investigated child abuse in care homes in Gwynedd and Clwyd dating back as far as 1974, proved to be a catalyst for the creation of a children's commissioner for Wales, and in 2001 the '*Children's Commissioner for Wales Act*' was created. This act detailed the exact roles and functions of this post, and also the legislative bounds



within which this commissioner must function; and the responsibilities of government in working with this person.

*'The principal aim of the Commissioner in exercising his functions is to safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of children...'*

*(Welsh Assembly Government, 2001)*

The role of the Commissioner includes listening to complaints from children and young people, offering advice and guidance, making recommendations to government, whistle blowing in areas of concern including safe guarding, and more. The creation of such a post in Wales is further demonstration of the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to ensuring the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are a reality in children and young people's lives.

As discussed previously, the Welsh Assembly Government has made significant steps to ensure that the content and principles of the UNCRC have been echoed in Welsh legislation – with 'Extending Entitlement' (2000) being a demonstration of this.

Earlier in the chapter we explored what was meant by a 'right', and how this differed from an 'entitlement', and whilst the difference may seem subtle, it is very important to note when talking about the role of government in the access to rights. So, a right can be said to be that which exists regardless of the forces and circumstances surrounding it; though access to that right may be denied or violated in a number of ways, the 'right' itself does not cease to exist. Whereas an 'entitlement' exists only as something that is given explicitly, and ideally takes the existence of a right towards a point of action and responsibility. It is this 'responsibility' of government which is measured through the monitoring systems, such as that of the UNCRC and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. It is essential that such monitoring systems are robust and effective, to ensure these responsibilities are being met. More importantly to ensure that young people's own experiences reflect what is contained in government strategy and policy; and that child and young people's rights are not just rhetoric, but a reality for young people in Wales.

### Listening to children and young people in Wales: Funky Dragon

Funky Dragon is the children and young people's Assembly for Wales. It was formally established in 2003, by a group of young people from across Wales, and the Welsh Assembly Government. It exists to allow nought to twenty five year olds in Wales the opportunity to access their right to have their opinion taken into account when decisions are being made which affect them (as described in Article twelve of the UNCRC). It aims to give children and young people the opportunity to exercise this right on a National level, and to ensure that Government (and other key decision makers) are taking their views into account when creating legislation, policy, guidance etc. The way that Funky Dragon works is primarily through an elected group of one hundred young people (aged eleven to twenty five); who are elected by their peers through local authority wide youth forums and youth councils. It also undertakes a range of other activities, including research and consultations with young people across Wales, in order that they can access their right to Article twelve. Prior to the existence of Funky Dragon, there were two groups which existed in Wales – attempting to do similar things. One was an amalgamation of a few youth forums from across Wales, and the other was a Government led initiative called *Young Voice*. It was eventually decided by those involved at the time, that an independent, young people's organisation was the best model; but that Government in Wales would be happy to support this structure financially, in the form of a grant.

The existence of Funky Dragon in Wales provides an opportunity for both young people, and Government; as it offers the possibility for members of Government to meet directly with young people and hear their views (and more importantly the views of the young people they represent). Funky Dragon is also recognised as an effective avenue for involving children and young people in the formal legislative, and policy development processes (e.g. giving evidence at Committees; undertaking consultation exercises). This is not to say that the relationship between Government and Funky Dragon is always completely effective or without issue. As with any key relationship there is the requirement for both sides to monitor working practices and effectiveness; in order to

implement any positive change necessary. There may also be occasions when one side of the relationship simply cannot fulfil what is expected of them by the other; or when no agreement can be reached on particular issues. There is also the opportunity for one to be critical of the other; and provided this is done effectively and constructively – this is a positive part of the relationship between Government in Wales and Funky Dragon: the children and young people’s assembly for Wales.

An example of this ‘critical friend’ role comes from the role that Funky Dragon has played with regards to reporting directly to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Our Rights, Our Story: a young people’s report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

In the 2002 round of reporting to the UN Committee, the NGO (non governmental organisation) delegation from Wales, invited two young people to attend the 'pre-session hearing' in Geneva with the Committee (that is, the hearing between the UN Committee, NGO's, children, young people and ombudsman, prior to the formal 'session' with government). These young people came from a group who were working on the design and establishment of Funky Dragon. These young people felt that whilst they had an interesting experience, their contribution was minimal and had little effect, because they were unable to effectively speak on behalf of other young people, or to represent a wide range of views, outside of their own. Therefore these young people recommended that if Funky Dragon young people were to form part of this reporting process in future, they should ensure that they gathered and presented the views of a wide range of young people from across Wales.

Therefore in 2005 (two years before the next round of UK reporting to the UN Committee), members of Funky Dragon decided to embark on a research project to establish to what extent young people in Wales were able to access their rights, as described in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The research included the views of more than twelve thousand young people from all Local

Authorities in Wales. These views were gathered primarily using quantitative research methods (e.g. a 'national survey' which took place in two secondary schools within each local authority); though did involve a number of qualitative methods on a smaller scale. The research was designed and led by a steering group of young people from Funky Dragon who received support and training from Funky Dragon staff and staff at Swansea University. The group was responsible for the design of research questions, research methods, data analysis, report writing and the development of recommendations to be presented to the United Nations Committee.

The steering group decided to divide their research into a number of themes (all of which were contained within the UNCRC). They decided upon the themes of: health, information, participation and education. The data collection stage of the research was primarily undertaken by Funky Dragon staff, with direction and monitoring from the steering group members. Staff then worked closely with young people to analyse the data and draw findings and recommendations from it. In total the report (named '*Our Rights Our Story*') contained fifty four recommendations. The report findings and recommendations were presented in person by young people to both Welsh Government and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. One of the Committee members also came and met with young people from Funky Dragon on a visit to Wales. After this all members of the Committee met to discuss everything they had learned from the Government, NGO, Children's Commissioner and Funky Dragon report (as well as reports from the other three nations of the UK); and made a series of recommendations to UK government (known as 'concluding observations'). Of the fifty four recommendations made in the *Our Rights Our Story* report, twenty seven of them appeared in the UN Committee's *concluding observations*. Funky Dragon continue to converse with Welsh Government about the recommendations from this research; and also intend to embark on additional research for the next round of reporting to the UN in 2013. At the time of writing, members have formed a steering group for the new project, and have decided upon a name for the project (being 'Funky's United Nations Challenge'). They will now undergo a period of training about the UNCRC and social research; and then begin designing this next round of research. The work of the 'Our

Rights, Our Story' project will be explored in more detail in both the chapter entitled 'The Role of Education in the Accessing of Rights' (page 43), and the 'Methodology' chapter (page 75).

### Conclusion

During this chapter we have explored the concepts of rights and entitlements, and their specific meaning and significance in a Welsh context. We have also explored the history of human rights and children's rights, in order to understand the requirement for, and significance of a separate and distinctive human rights instrument for children and young people; namely, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This chapter has begun to explore the content of the UNCRC, and described the strict and detailed reporting and monitoring process which exists to ensure that countries around the world who have ratified the UNCRC, are doing the utmost to make its principles and articles a reality for children and young people living in their countries, and under their policy and legislation. We have explored some of the realities of children's rights in Wales, and their translation into Welsh policy (e.g. *'Extending Entitlement'*); and highlighted the difference between policy in Wales and policy in England; allowing us to conclude that, broadly speaking, the political and legislative context in Wales seems largely respectful of children's rights and the UNCRC. We have looked at the existence of Funky Dragon (the children and young people's assembly for Wales), and the decision to undertake research on behalf of children and young people across Wales, so that their voice may be heard directly by UN Committee members wanting to know the reality of life for children and young people in Wales. Finally, we looked at some existing research into the level at which young people in Wales are able to access their rights and entitlements; and identified the need for further research to explore the question of whether Welsh Assembly Government's rhetoric is becoming a reality in the experiences of young people across the country. It is these 'real life' experiences of young people, that this research will attempt to discover and record.

### The Role of Education in the Accessing of Rights

Thus far, this thesis has explored the ‘political’ context of this research – i.e. its setting within Wales: a ‘devolved nation’ of the UK; and within the legislative and policy framework which has been created by Welsh Assembly Government, and continues to regularly evolve as Welsh Government gains more power, authority and focus as it matures in its existence (devolution having taken place in 1999). It has also explored the concept of ‘rights’ as *‘that which a person is entitled to’*; and the development and implementation of ‘human rights instruments’, specifically exploring the most widely ratified human rights convention of all; namely the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (also known as the UNCRC).

This chapter will discuss the theme of ‘education’, within which setting this research will be based. It will explore the development of formal education within Great Britain, and more specifically in Wales, since the process of devolution in 1999; and its movement towards the inclusion of children and young people's rights. It will also seek to identify some of the developments in education policy in Wales, which are different to policy development in England (for example). It will demonstrate the fundamental importance of education, and of ‘good’ education; not just for the individual, but for the family, and social and economic reasons; and most importantly for the ability of children and young people to access their rights. Finally this chapter will explore the concept of ‘rights’ within an educational setting, and attempt to demonstrate the important part which education has to play in how well children and young people are able to access their rights (both those specific to education, and others).

It is important to understand and clarify the context within which this research will be conducted, analysed and received. This research will focus on the extent to which young people, living in Wales are able to access their rights within education; therefore it is vital to explore the educational structure which these young people are experiencing; how it has come to its current form, and the events which have shaped it along the way. It is also important to note that the development of ‘education’ in Great

Britain has been over a far greater number of years than the formalisation of children's rights in this country. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has only been in existence since 1989. It will be important to note how well the education system has (or indeed has not) encompassed and embraced the relatively recent introduction of children's rights into the educational sphere; particularly in Wales.

By exploring the importance and value of education for the individual child or young person; for the family, and in particular parents; for wider society; and for the economy of Wales and the UK; this chapter aims to demonstrate the value of this particular research. Only through exploring and highlighting young people's experiences of education, can progress be made to ensure positive outcomes and experiences, and the equitable access of rights for all children and young people in our society.

#### The Importance of Education for the Access of Rights

Education is a 'universal provision' in Wales, and as such it is the most accessed and widely experienced provision for children and young people living in this country. Therefore school offers the best possible way of ensuring the equal and adequate access of rights. Also as a 'state party' provision (i.e. a government funded, designed and monitored provision) it can be legislated for, monitored, and government can be held accountable for the way it is working. Therefore through education, we can monitor the accessing of rights, and attempt to build an education system which suits the needs of learners and allows the full enjoyment of their rights. It should of course be noted that the provision of education does not **guarantee** that children and young people are able to claim their rights; as it still requires that this right be claimed (ie. That children and young people attend school, and the opportunities it provides).

There are a number of specific articles within the UNCRC related to education, and the way in which education should treat young people and value individuals. Education and school are also vital in accessing other rights, and in highlighting where other rights may not be being accessed.

In Wales (as in the majority of ‘Western’ countries) the most commonly experienced provision for children and young people is that of education. There are, of course, other state provided services which children and young people experience throughout their lives – however these tend to be experienced in different measure by different individuals. (For example, arguably all children and young people will have some experience of health services; however, these experiences will vary greatly depending on age, location and particularly individual need). This universal access and provision of education for all children and young people, under the age of sixteen, means that the structures and systems of formal education and school are best placed to ensure the equitable fulfilment of children’s rights.

*‘...the principle that education should be compulsory is...a guarantee of the rights of the child.’*

*(Cohen, 1981. Page 1)*

As a provision of the state party, this universal institution is also more easily legislated, monitored and reformed (as necessary), than other institutions such as the family for example. The ‘family’ (in whatever form) is the primary care giver to most children and young people (aside from looked after young people), and as such is the most fundamental influence on a child or young person’s life. This influence begins at birth and continues throughout childhood, adolescence and most commonly into adulthood too. During the first three or four years, the ‘family’ and close friends are arguably the only influence upon a child, until the age at which the child begins nursery or primary school, and other influences begin. However, the experiences and practices within individual families are much more difficult to legislate, monitor and influence. There would be very few people who would argue for government intervention in the way people raise their children day to day (other than extreme and serious cases, e.g. abuse). However, the vast differences in the familial and domestic experiences of children and young people means there are huge inequalities in the way children and young people access their rights. These different starting points in life place even more importance on the role of education to the equal access of rights for all children and young people.

There are specific articles within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the



Child, which relate directly to education; such as Article twenty-eight.

*'State Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall,*

*a) make primary education compulsory and available free to all....'*

*(Article 28 (1). United Nations, 1989)*

This particular article then goes on to detail more specific requirements of the state provision of education, including the need to offer appropriate information and guidance for students, and the need to combat truancy and school 'drop-outs' as part of their role.

The school environment, whilst having its specific duties in providing education to children and young people; must also take its responsibility in providing access to a range of other rights, detailed within the UNCRC. Such as Article three which states that

*'State parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of staff, as well as competent supervision.'*

*(Article 3(3) United Nations, 1989)*

This relates to the monitoring and training of staff that work with children and young people, this includes teachers and all schools staff; who have a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of students among other things. Also Article twelve, which states that *'...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...'*. This article does not directly mention education, although it mentions 'all matters affecting the child', which would include decisions being made within their education and school; so has a direct implication upon the responsibility of the school system to listen to its students.

Educational establishments also have a vital part to play in monitoring children and young people's well being, and 'whistle blowing' for those children and young people

who may appear not to be accessing other rights, outside of the school environment. For example, a child who is being abused within the family may go unnoticed, and unaided outside of school; however, their situation may be noticed and acted upon by members of school staff. This means that the educational establishment and the staff working within it have a responsibility to ensure that the basic fundamental rights of each child are being met, and to raise concern where they fear this may not be the case. In this respect, although these rights do not relate and refer directly to education or school, we can see the enormous importance of the education system to ensuring the safeguarding, protection and ultimately survival of all children and young people. Ultimately there may be times (as argued by Cohen 1981) when the choices that parents make are detrimental to the rights of their children; therefore the state provision of universal, equitable and accessible services, which ensure that access to rights, are essential.

*'...the state could be seen as the champion and protector of children's rights against their parents.'*

*(Cohen, 1981. Page 25)*

### An Exploration of the Importance of Education

Education, formal education and specifically schooling are (in the United Kingdom, and most other countries) a universal provision, experienced to some degree by all children and young people. It provides significant experiences for children and young people, and arguably has immeasurable impact upon their future. During this section we will explore the huge importance and significance of formal education.

### ***The Importance of Education for the individual child or young person***

Looking at education from a 'children's rights based' approach, it is vital to explore the benefits of education for the individual child or young person experiencing it. It is widely accepted by most that education, and 'schooling' has an important part to play in 'socialising' its students into the accepted norms and values of the society in which they live. Reid (1986) says that

*'...schools are about more than just learning in the cognitive sense of mastering subjects on the timetable, and are about learning in the social sense.'*

(Reid, 1986. page 47)

This is in line with the UNCRC which says that education should prepare students for a life as full and active citizens. It is therefore important to monitor how well the current education system meets this fundamental right.

Prior to beginning school (or possibly nursery school) (i.e. their first experience of the formal education system), most children have spent the majority of their time with their own family members, and close friends (who it is likely share very similar norms and values as their families). Therefore this step into education becomes the first chance to learn more about the world, in its wider context. Talcott Parsons (in Reid, 1986) refers to four main functions of education, one of which is the *'Internalisation of social values and norms, at a higher level than is available within the family.'* (page 50). It is through this process of socialisation within schools that children and young people can begin to make sense of the world, and their role within it. So, we can see the absolute importance of formal education for the individual, the family and the wider society. Indeed this concept of the world and them within it, is echoed by the UNCRC which says that education should prepare pupils to live a 'full life' as 'active citizens', and to develop respect for the values of the society in which they live – so schooling must address this. In Wales we see developments such as the *'PSE Framework, 2008'*, which identifies 'active citizenship' as one of the key themes for learning within key stage three and four of PSE (i.e. Personal and Social Education). How well this works in practice is something which will be explored later in this thesis.

The effects of a child or young person's education on their adult life should not be underestimated; indeed

*'...our experiences at school ... remain of some consequence throughout our lives, and affect our views, attitudes and behaviour over a range of facets of adult life.'*

(Reid, 1986. Page 47)

This is for a range of reasons, from the friends we make to the exams we pass, and from the experiences on the playground to the teachers we learn with. These experiences and

the effects of them on a student's personality, self esteem, academic and professional achievement, relationships; are largely immeasurable, but are no doubt profound.

One key importance of formal education (says Giddens, 2001) is learning how to learn. Without formal education beginning in childhood and continuing throughout 'growing up', people will not learn how to learn. There is much evidence to suggest that people find it easier to learn, acquire knowledge and gain understanding at a young age, than they do as they get older. Therefore, aside from the actual lessons which people are taught in schools, it is important for later life that people have great experience of how best to learn. i.e. how to actively listen; how to take on board and internalise information; how to put learned knowledge into practice; and transfer skills from one situation to another. Without formal education, this 'learning to learn' (so vital throughout life) may never happen. It is desirable that long after education (in its formal sense) is completed, individuals continue to learn and be open to new experiences and knowledge in life (e.g. in work, relationships, further education etc.) This transition to, and experience of adult life is dependant on a large number of factors (economic, social etc.), but it is the role of education to be able to provide a 'service' which goes as far as possible to 'levelling the playing field' (i.e. creating true equality of opportunity) for young people entering adult life.

It is a fact of society that not all children and young people have similar and equitable lives outside of school. Financial factors, familial structure and support, illness, siblings ... there is an almost infinite list of factors which affect a child or young person's life, and may in turn affect their experience of education and school. Some children are not brought up in circumstances which teach them the basic fundamentals of life; such as the difference between right and wrong, how to communicate with others etc. It is for these reasons that formal education is also vital. This access to other children and young people, and other adults begins to raise awareness in the pupil that the circumstances and norms of their home life may not necessarily be the 'norms' of wider society. Taken to the extreme, the integration of children into school life may also be the opportunity for children and young people to understand that things which are happening to them at

home are unacceptable, and that other members of their peer group aren't living in the same way. In this sense formal education has an invaluable role to play in the provision of such basic, fundamental rights, as the right to freedom from abuse and neglect (Article nineteen UNCRC).

It is important that formal education can work in a way which acknowledges the different lives of its students, and does not assume a system of learning and an ethos which may fit the majority, but excludes large numbers of young people from meaningful engagement and high attainment; due to factors outside of the school. The recognition of each child or young person as an individual, with their own specific needs and preferences is vital to ensure the right to education is fulfilled for all, and that school does not perpetuate the inequalities of society, but works to combat them instead. The principle of 'non discrimination' is enshrined within the UNCRC, and appears in Article two, paragraph one, explained in great detail; and highlights the government's responsibility to ensure equal access to rights for all children and young people, regardless of

*'...the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.'*

*(Article 2(1) United Nations, 1989 )*

### ***The Importance of Education for the Economy and Society***

Many sociologists and social researchers argue that the very existence of education is a tool which primarily exists to serve the economic needs of the country; and furthermore, that the content and specifics of a student's learning are geared to suit the specific economic climate within which it exists. Giddens (page 492, 2001) referring to the role of education, says that '*...schools and universities ...are expected to prepare new generations of citizens for participation in economic life.*' This preparation for economic life as an 'aim' of education means that often its content and format is adapted to suit this aim. Giddens argues that

*'...policy makers and employers are concerned to ensure that education and*

*training programmes coincide with a country's economic profile and employment.'*

*(Giddens, 2001. Page 492)*

One sociologist who has spoken in detail about this strong link between education and the economy is Ivan Illich (1973), who Giddens wrote about in 2001. He identifies four main functions of education, one of which is '*...the distribution of people amongst occupational roles.*' Another is '*...the acquisition of socially approved skills and knowledge*' (page 512) Illich terms this as the 'hidden curriculum' of education, in that it is not explicitly spoken about amongst educationalists and students; though the end product is inevitable. If this is the case, this would go against the rights of children and young people by failing to be geared towards the needs of the individual students, and to recognise the unique talents and personalities of those students (as laid out in Article twenty nine (subsection 1.a) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).

Many sociologists and social researchers have argued that formal education is a process of preparing children and young people for the roles that they will play later in their lives. For example, Giddens (2001) states that Paul Willis, in 1977, carried out a longitudinal study with a group of working class 'lads' from a school in Birmingham. He spent a lot of time with them, and later went back to speak to them once they had left school and found employment. He found that the behaviours which they displayed in school were continued into their adult and working life. For example, he commented that it was clear the 'lads' fully understood the rules and boundaries of the school; but that predominantly this understanding was used to rebel against all that they knew they should be doing. He later found that this was the case in the workplace too, and they constantly tried to 'get away with' breaches of the rules. Ultimately Willis concluded that

*'...during the process of schooling, children from lower-class or minority backgrounds simply come to see that they are 'not clever enough' to expect to get highly paid or high status jobs in their future work lives ... the experience of academic failure teaches them to recognise their intellectual limitations; having*

*accepted their 'inferiority', they move into occupations with limited career prospects.'*

*(Willis in Giddens, 2001. Page 513)*

So, Willis's research would seem to back-up the theory of many that education (in its current form at least) exists partly, if not entirely, to prepare children and young people for their future employment, at the level which society needs and expects them to be. If this is really the case, and Paul Willis is correct about education simply preparing young people for future employment, this has serious implications for the access of rights. As already stated, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (henceforth referred to as UNCRC) says that education should be tailored to meet individual needs and should encourage each child's unique gifts and talents, so that they may fulfil their full potential. If pupils are merely being 'prepared' for the role which 'society' needs them to play, this clearly isn't happening.

Further sociologists have expressed similar views to those which Paul Willis demonstrated in his research. Talcott Parsons (1956) (cited in Reid 1986) talks about one of the four main functions of education being the '*...selection and allocation of pupils into the adult role system, including the occupational structure.*' According to Parsons, a person's education is designed to prepare them for the role they will inevitably end up playing in society as an adult. This, he argues suits society, and ensures its function. It also suits the economy of the country as it ensures that students are all prepared to step into their almost predetermined occupation and role. This is reminiscent of the work of Illich (in Giddens 2001) and what he termed the 'hidden curriculum', which he believes exists to '*...teach children that their role in life is to know their place and sit still in it*' (page 512). Webb and Westerguard (1991) (in Giddens 2001) agree with this opinion that education and schooling prepare students for future employment; however they do not necessarily see this as negative. It is inevitable that the majority of students will need to enter the world of work in their adult life; therefore there are lessons to be learned in school which are vital in preparing them for this transition.

*'Children get an early taste of what the world of work will be like, learning that*

*they are expected to be punctual and apply themselves diligently to the tasks which those in authority set for them.'*

*(Webb and Westerguard 1991, in Giddens 2001. Page 513)*

This notion could be seen to echo Article twenty nine of the UNCRC, which states that education should prepare children and young people for a '*...full and active life in a free society...*' This could include a preparation for future employment.

School is about much more than the academic, timetabled lessons taught within it. It has a profound effect (or attempts to) on its students' morals and values. Some argue that the purpose of education is to recreate the norms and values of the society within which it exists, therefore teaching students to accept society as it is, and not attempt to change it, or aspire to be anything other than what they are. Reid (1986) refers to the work of Bowles and Gintis who see formal education as:

*'...tailoring pupils' self concepts, aspirations and social class identities to society's needs through the teaching of proper subordination, by rewarding docility, passivity and obedience...'*

*(Reid 1986 Page 276)*

These views are not uncommon amongst Marxist theorists who hold strongly the belief that 'education' (as a structured, state provision) is a means by which the capitalist state is maintained. Althusser (1971) (cited in Reid 1986) refers to education as an 'ideological state apparatus', which exists '*...to disseminate ruling class ideology.*' Althusser says that formal education is largely seen as positive by society, but this is because its function of maintaining social class systems is largely concealed. If this is the case, we may begin to question whether this is an entirely negative effect of education. The UNCRC says that education should prepare children and young people for a full and active life as members of society, so it can be assumed that part of that is to educate them about what the socially accepted norms and values are. The problems are when the society within which the education system is operating is flawed, and therefore formal education serves to replicate the injustices and inequalities of the wider society. It is also problematic if, as Althusser suggests, children and young people are educated in such a way that they do not question the world in which they exist, they accept the



'status quo' and their inevitable role within it. The part of the UNCRC which says that children and young people should become 'active' members of a 'free society' is crucial. This implies that they should be encouraged to ask questions about the world around them, and challenge things appropriately.

Reid (1986) says Althusser's view of education as creating individuals who enter their 'inevitable' role in society without question, is too simplistic a view of education, and does not account for individuals within the education system. He argues that it wrongly sees them as parts of a '*...mechanical process which they are powerless to resist or affect.*' which he argues is simply not the case. Others however, believe that the experiences of school do not necessarily mean that the current position of society remains the 'status quo', but do seem to imply that children and young people are somewhat 'powerless' to shape society of their own will and volition; rather they may do so, only as a product of their schooling and educational experiences.

*'The structure of education for any one generation of children has a strong determining influence on the shape and structure of the future society which their expectation and beliefs will create.'*

*(Cohen, 1981. Page 1)*

If the ideal is that education creates a generation of people with strong moral grounding; good academic and vocational achievement; and a social conscience which leads them to be active members of the world in which they exist, questioning injustice and fighting for positive change; it is vital that the experiences of school correlate with these desired outcomes. The creation of 'active citizens' for example, requires the nurture and fostering of these attitudes and skills within school. The right to be listened to and involved in decision making processes is one of the guiding principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (as contained in Article twelve), and therefore should be a principle within an education system which has children's rights at its heart. Only by experiencing what it's like to voice their opinion, to listen to the opinion of others, and to be involved in the process of change, will young people grow into adults who recognise the importance of 'participation' as adults (thus becoming truly 'active citizens' in a 'free society' as the UNCRC sets out to achieve).

If, as Cohen argues, '*...today's schools are tomorrow's society,*' what does this mean for society if school is not a place which respects rights, and values the equal accessing of rights? According to most sociologists and social researchers, school plays an enormous part in the shaping of the individual and the cohesion of a common value base – so if education does not do all it can to foster the integration of children's rights (and human rights) in every day life and experiences, then what hope is there for the rest of society? It needs to start within education. This is why this piece of research into how well young people in Wales are able to access their rights within education, is so valuable and important.

It can be argued that education, and a universal provision of it, is essential for society to be able to challenge the inequality which exists between children and young people of different classes and backgrounds. This is quite contrasting to the views of Marxist theorists. The essence of compulsory education for all should result in similar and equitable experiences for students of all backgrounds and classes. However, it is essential that the structure of 'education' be designed to ensure this is so. John Rawles's 'A Theory of Justice' cited in Cohen (1981) says that

*'Chances to acquire cultural knowledge and skills should not depend upon one's class position, and so the school system ... should be designed to even out the class barriers.'*

*(Rawles in Cohen, 1981. page 7)*

Cohen herself argues that it is very difficult for the state to control the 'equity' of education. Some students will inevitably work harder than others; some will have greater support from home. Indeed the UNCRC does not mention the *same* education for all, but an equitable education. Does this have to mean the same thing? Students do have differing outside influences which need to be accounted for (such as familial support, financial stress). Students also have different abilities, preferred learning styles, different talents – which should all be catered for according to the UNCRC.

The issue is of how well this is really being achieved. It could be the case that the

current education system is working on a 'one size fits all' basis, and therefore catering predominantly to a certain 'type' of student. This research will endeavour to explore this issue more closely, and investigate the real experiences of young people within the Welsh education system today. It will also suggest potential ways by which the current situation might be improved (where appropriate).

Some argue that the provision of good education prevents problems later in life. Writing specifically about 'early years' education, Sir Christopher Ball (1994) wrote about education as decreasing the chances of disengagement and juvenile delinquency. If this point of view is to be believed, we can see the enormous impact of positive educational experiences on people's adult lives, and society in general.

### ***The Importance of Education for the family***

There are a number of possible benefits of education for the family, and in particular, for parents. The socialisation of their offspring in a setting other than their own home, and by people other than themselves must largely be seen by parents as important and necessary for the development of their child or children. Education can also be seen as important for creating well-balanced, rounded individuals, who continue as such throughout life. According to some, a 'good' education (for however that is measured) can prevent problems later on in life, which can only be a positive thing for parents.

*'The influence of early learning is so important that, if you give children a good start, there is much less risk of things going wrong later.'*

*(Ball, 1994. Page 6)*

For some parents school is also the opportunity for their child or children to have the same opportunities afforded to them that other children have. For many living in less privileged circumstances, the chance of a good education equals the chance to better oneself and create a 'better' life, than that which you have been born into. However, this provision of an equal access to education or equitable and comparable educational experiences does not necessarily mean that these children and young people have the same chances and same outcomes as other young people. The level at which young

people are able to access their rights may still differ greatly; for example, the levels of support from outside of school may differ, the encouragement and ability to be ambitious may differ, and all of this will certainly have an impact. Just because two young people go to the same school and the same lessons, does not necessarily mean that they have the same experience, and the same outcomes.

At a fairly rudimentary level the beginning of a child's school career marks the beginning of their '*emancipation from the family*'. This terminology is employed by Talcott Parsons (1956) (cited in Reid 1986) when describing what he sees as one of the main functions of education. It is essential, if the child is to become an adult, participating fully in society and the world of work, that the child begins to experience time away from the family, and begins to interact using the accepted norms and values of a wider society. As we have touched on previously in this chapter, children enter education from a range of backgrounds and circumstances; as such they have different 'starting points' to education. If the purpose of education is to create individuals who are well educated, not only academically, but also socially, then time must be dedicated to this aspect of schooling. It's not enough to *hope* that these social lessons are learned, and internalised by all young people to the same extent. This is where lessons such as 'Personal Social Education' (PSE) are so valuable, as they look to address these 'life skills', and (as the UNCRRC says), prepare students for a 'full and active life'. This socialisation is also the chance for children and young people to learn about the important role they have to play in the rights of others. Through this interaction with others in the school environment, children begin to learn that they have the potential to affect the way that others are able to experience their education and access their rights.

Others, including Illich (1973) and Ball (1994) see one of the fundamental functions of education as providing 'custodial care' of children and young people. This ensures that (on the whole) parents and guardians know the whereabouts of their children for a large part of the week, and can hand over caring responsibilities for the times that they are in the care of school staff. This, Ball argues is vital, in order to enable parents to engage in social and economic life on an equal basis as all other adults; so that they may return to

employment for example.

### The Development of Education in Wales post devolution: policy and practice

Evaluation exercises carried out regarding the Welsh Assembly Government's '*Extending Entitlement*' (2000) on the whole seemed to reflect that young people with a greater number of negative influences in their lives (e.g. poor family life) found it more difficult to access the entitlements detailed by the Welsh Assembly Government. The study also found the opposite to be true; that is that young people with the most positive factors and influences in their lives found it easiest to access the things they're entitled to. This further highlights the need for systems to be put in place which combat inequality and ensure the equality of opportunity to access rights and entitlements. If not, those children and young people who are most advantaged in life continue to be so; and those who are most disadvantaged through a variety of factors continue to be the children and young people who live the most difficult and disadvantaged lives.

Following the publication of '*Extending Entitlement*' in 2000, and focusing more specifically on education and training in Wales, came '*The Learning Country*' (2001). This strategy document sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's intentions for '*building the foundations for learning*' so that education and lifelong learning become the best that they can be for all children and young people, and remain so over time.

*'It's about building a Wales where all our young people – not just a select few – get the best start in life ... reach their full potential ...'*

*(Welsh Assembly Government, 2001)*

This idea of education which allows and encourages children and young people to reach their potential, is echoed strongly within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child itself, which states that education should be directed to '*...the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.*' (Article twenty-nine (1)(a), UNCRC). This particular document also begins to detail plans for the fourteen to nineteen year old age group. In this area in particular we can draw links to the earlier entitlements, the seven core aims and the UNCRC itself.

For example, it highlights the need to have more vocational opportunities and the necessity of tailoring education to meet each individual young person's needs, preferences and abilities. This links closely with the principles and values of the UNCRC – although it is not explicitly highlighted in this particular document. Further steps were taken with regard to this age group by the government in 2004, when they published *'Learning Pathways: 14 – 19 (2004)'*. The aim of this strategy was clearly laid out from the offset, with the aspiration being that

*'95% of young people by the age of 25 to be ready for high skilled employment or higher education by 2015.'*

*(Welsh Assembly Government. 2004)*

*'Learning Pathways'* (2004) goes further than its predecessor (*'The Learning Country'*) in detailing the ways young people's individual needs and abilities will be catered for. It details ways in which young people will be given greater choice in the subjects they study, and gain a wider breadth of knowledge and experiences, through what it terms as *'key elements one to six'*. Key element one is the *'individual learning pathway'* which caters for the statutory requirements of education and accreditation, within the boundaries of individual need. Key elements two and three offer wider choice and greater experiential learning. Whilst key elements four, five and six are aimed at supporting students, through *'learning support...personal support....careers advice and guidance.'* This demonstrates a commitment from the Welsh Assembly Government to develop a much more holistic education system which recognises the failings and unsuitability of a 'one size fits all' education system. In keeping with the values and principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, this strategy gives the strongest indicator yet that education may begin to take account of *'all aspects of a learner's life'* and finding a 'pathway' which fits each individual.

Comparing UK government policy with Welsh Government policy, it largely seems that Wales is much closer to a 'rights based' ethos than UK government. As detailed in the previous chapter (*An exploration of human rights and children's rights – page 13*), legislation and policy in England seems to place responsibility on the young people themselves to claim their rights; rather than on government to ensure that they are

providing opportunity to claim their rights. Policy relating to young people in England also makes clear links between rights and behaviour; whereas in Wales, there is generally an understanding that it is not appropriate to remove a child or young person's rights as a form of punishment: rights are unconditional. However, UK government's most recent education policy (that is for the English education system), *'Your Child, your schools, our future: building a 21<sup>st</sup> century schools system'* (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009), does seem to be more closely aligned with the values and content of the UNCRC (though still falling short of making formal commitment and reference to it). This document contains chapters on teaching methods, support for students and an education which prepares young people for life (amongst others), all of which echo elements of the Convention. It also makes reference to a *'pupil guarantee'* which details what children and young people are 'entitled to'. This includes:

*'...a system in which no matter what their... preference for style of learning they will have access to a course and to qualifications that suit them.'*

*(Department for Children Schools and Families, 2009)*

This clearly follows the right of children and young people contained in the UNCRC which says that education should be tailored to develop the child's personality and talents to their fullest potential. Whilst this latest development within education, and children and young people's policy within England, it seems that UK government are moving towards a commitment to making children's rights a reality. However, there is still no explicit mention of rights within any of these policies, strategies and guidance.

Wales has come a long way in designing an education for young people, which aims to be in line with their rights under the UNCRC. As it is now more than a decade since devolution, and the establishment of a Welsh Assembly Government, this research is appropriately timed to attempt to ascertain whether the reality for young people in Wales is as good as the policies appear at first glance.

#### *Our Rights, Our Story: exploring the theme of 'education'*

*'Our Rights, Our Story'* was a research project carried out by Funky Dragon to explore

how well young people in Wales were able to access their rights as detailed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The research was designed and led by a steering group of young people. As described in the previous chapter, the steering group of young people chose to divide their research into a number of themes: namely education, health, participation and information. Within education they felt there were a number of articles contained within the UNCRC, which relate clearly, and refer specifically to educational rights. For example, Article twenty eight, section one, which states that:

*'State parties recognise the right of the child to education, ... in particular:*

*a) make primary education compulsory and available free to all;*

*b) encourage the development of different forms of secondary education ...'*

*(United Nations, 1989, Article 28(1))*

Young people also felt that since Welsh Assembly Government has publicly committed to the UNCRC and has translated much of its content into 'Wales specific' policy and guidance (with the existence of the 'seven core aims' and 'Extending Entitlement' amongst others), young people felt that this was an important opportunity to hold Government to account for the type of educational opportunities that they have committed to providing to all children and young people in Wales. As well as this, the young people were very aware that there is a large number of articles within the UNCRC which do not mention 'education' specifically, but which can relate to this area of young people's lives. For example, Article sixteen(as well as others) , which states that:

*'No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation.'*

*(United Nations, 1989, Article 16(1))*

Young people felt that Article sixteen could relate to issues of bullying within schools, and that it was therefore relevant to the theme of 'education'. Young people on the steering group also felt that as 'education' is experienced by almost all young people, and plays such a big role in their lives, it was the area likely to have the most impact upon their access to rights. (With the possible exception of the 'family', which it was felt would be too difficult and largely inappropriate for Funky Dragon to research



directly).

The qualitative National Survey (undertaken with two schools in each of Wales's local authority areas) contained a total of fourteen questions related to education. In addition to this there was a number of 'qualitative' research methods employed to gather data about this theme. The most significant activity for the theme of 'education' was an activity where young people were given time to work individually and complete the sentence: *'If I were head teacher, I would ...'*. This was designed to give young people the space to use their imaginations and think about what they would do to improve the experience of education for those young people in their school. This activity also meant that young people of differing abilities and interests could complete it at a level they felt comfortable with. This provided the steering group with a large number of suggestions that young people might make about education – and which they might be able to translate into recommendations for government and the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. There was a second activity which related to education, and was part of the 'workshop' research which was carried out. This activity asked a number of specific questions (e.g. *'How much do you enjoy school?'*). In reality questions and the activity that was designed resulted in additional quantitative data and very little qualitative data at all. Ultimately this activity added little (if anything) to the data gathered in the National Surveys.

Members of the Funky Dragon steering group identified a number of themes within education that they wanted the project to cover, all based on the articles contained within the UNCRC. These themes were: bullying; personal social education (PSE); the effects of education on their future; knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC; teaching methods; school transport; religious needs in education; careers advice and guidance; GCSE subject choices; discipline; and personal support and guidance. Each of these was covered in differing amounts of detail, and using a number of methods. For example, some questions were included in the 'national survey', and therefore generated only quantitative data; whilst other issues were covered in workshop sessions with smaller groups of young people; and others were covered by a combination of two methods.

This variety of methods inevitably generated a different amount of data for each

theme, some findings proving to be useful and insightful, whilst others seemed to generated very little. The main findings which young people from the steering group chose the highlight from their report when they met with members of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and in various summaries since were to do with bullying; personal social education (PSE); knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC; teaching methods and discipline. They felt that these provided the most startling findings within education, and were the ones they most wanted to highlight.

### **Some findings of the *Our Rights Our Story* research: Bullying**

During their planning stages of the 'Our Rights, Our Story' project, the young people on the steering group went through each individual article of the UNCRC, and identified those articles which they felt were most relevant to the lives of young people in Wales, and also discussed the potential implications of each of these within the settings they had chosen to base the research (i.e. education, health, information and participation). During this process, Article sixteen was identified by the group as a right which could relate directly to the problem of bullying; which often takes place within schools.

Article sixteen states that:

*'No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home, or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation,'*

*(United Nations, 1989, Article 16 (1))*

Young people also hypothesised that any young person experiencing bullying during their time at school, may find it increasingly difficult to access other parts of their education or really fulfill their educational potential. The group felt that this could be for a number of reasons, which might include fear, low self esteem, truancy, depression etc.; and they felt it was important to find out more about young peoples experiences, and the effect that these experiences can have on a young person's ability to access their rights within education.

Funky Dragon carried out a large scale questionnaire containing approximately fifty questions, and gathering the views of approximately eight thousand young people.

During this 'national survey', young people were asked two questions directly related to 'bullying'. Firstly, young people were asked: '*Have you ever been a victim of bullying in school?*'; and were secondly asked: '*Are there systems in place in your school to stop bullying?*'. There was a conscious decision made by the young people's steering group that no definition of bullying was given to young people taking part in the survey. The group were keen to recognise that the experience of bullying is often widely different from individual to individual, and they did not feel it was their place to define whether a person had been bullied or not. Ultimately, the group decided that it was the individual's experience they were interested in hearing about, and if a young person *felt* that they had been bullied (no matter how it's defined by others) this was significant. The feeling of being bullied would impact on their attitudes to and experiences of school, and education more generally.

In 2003, Welsh Assembly Government produced and circulated anti bullying guidance, which stated that all schools *must* have an 'anti bullying policy', and effective systems in place to tackle bullying within their school ('*Respecting Others*' 2003); and discussion with Welsh Assembly Government officials suggested that all schools had reported that they had these policies in place. Therefore the second question which the steering group wrote was designed to establish whether young people were aware of the systems which existed in their own particular school; and therefore begin to look at the effectiveness of the Welsh Assembly Government '*Respecting Others*' guidance of 2003.

The results and analysis of the data gathered showed that almost 46% of young people in the survey said they had been a victim of bullying within school; with 38.39% of young people said there were no anti bullying systems in their schools, and 3.82% said they 'didn't know' whether any systems existed to tackle the issue of bullying within their school. Further analysis of the data seemed to suggest that young people who have experienced bullying are less likely to know about anti bullying systems which are in their school. In addition to this, qualitative data suggested that even where young people were aware of the existence of anti bullying policies, they were generally dissatisfied with the quality and effectiveness of them.

*“If I were headteacher I would ... set a proper anti-bullying scheme to acknowledge the fact that bullying is happening, rather than denying it happens at all.” (Billy, Aged 13 from Wrexham)*

*(Our Rights Our Story, 2007, page 17)*

Other results from ‘Our Rights Our Story’ showed that young people who are bullied are less likely to engage in after school activities. It is not clear from OROS findings why this is, but it can be presumed this has a direct effect on these young people's ability to access other rights and the inherent right to an education which meets their own particular needs, and which allows them to develop to their full potential. Ultimately this could mean that (as the 'Our Rights, Our Story' steering group suspected initially), young people who are bullied are less able to access their rights to education than those young people who are not. As these were findings from quantitative research, gathered by questionnaire; it did not allow for the OROS research to find out why this might be the case. If any change is going to be possible in this area, to improve the lives of young people, further information and explanation would be needed.

Further results seemed to show that young people who reported that they had been the victim of bullying within school, were the young people most likely to report that they felt 'very unsafe' or 'unsafe' when traveling on school transport. This seems to suggest that bullying may take place whilst young people are journeying to and from school (for example, on a school bus). As with the findings around after school and extra curricular activities, there is no way to ascertain why this is the case, and so there is a need for further questions to be asked.

### **Some findings of the *Our Rights Our Story* research: Teaching Methods**

During the design of the 'Our Rights, Our Story' project, members of the Funky Dragon steering group were clear that they felt one of the major influences on a child or young person's experience of school and education as a whole, is their experience of teachers. As such, they were able to identify a number of parts of the UNCRC, which they felt related directly to the input of the classroom teacher and the methods that they employ in

their lessons. Teaching methods are referred to in Article twenty eight, which mentions the importance of education encompassing various ways of working (e.g. vocational training), and Article twenty nine, which highlights the need for education to develop the talents and individual personalities of its students. Funky Dragon members felt that the methods used to teach a subject could have a major effect on how well students learn and enjoy a subject; and that ultimately the more enjoyable a lesson was, the more memorable the learning. This hypothesis is echoed by Woods (1979), who did a study in secondary school and found that the way pupils judged teachers could be divided into four categories. These included 'control', 'fairness', 'disposition' and 'teaching techniques'. He concluded that a variety of methods and freedom to choose different options were really important to students; along with a teacher who was helpful and offered thorough explanations. Reid also cites Cortis and Grayson (1978) who say that

*'Pupils reflected on the extent to which lessons contained new material, were enjoyable, exciting, difficult or understood.'*

*(Cortis and Grayson, 1986. Page 101)*

Therefore, the steering group designed just one question which aimed to test this theory; as well as gathering information about how well young people taking part in the research felt that the lessons they experienced were suited to their own particular needs and preferences. During the 'national survey' data collection, participants were asked:

*'Are you happy with the methods of teaching you experience?*

- a) Always*
- b) Usually*
- c) Sometimes*
- d) Occasionally*
- e) Never'*

*(Our Rights, Our Story National Survey, 2007)*

Along with this question in the 'national survey', many young people highlighted teaching methods, learning styles and lesson plans in the more qualitative exercise which saw young people being asked to complete the sentence: *'If I were headteacher I would*

...'. This exercise saw a large number of responses which felt that lessons should be more physical, active, varied and memorable. For example,

*"I would make all lessons physical and energetic and fun."*

*(Our Rights Our Story, 2007. Page 30)*

The National Survey analysis showed that just over 40% of young people said they were always or usually happy; just over 27% young people in the survey said that they were sometimes happy with the methods they experienced in lessons; and almost 32% of young people in the survey were only occasionally or never happy with the teaching methods used in their lessons. Generally it seemed from the research that it was the 'older' age group (i.e. aged fourteen to nineteen) who were the least happy with the way in which they were taught. Steering group members felt that this may be for a number of reasons. For example, it could be that by this time young people have become bored with the methods that they have experienced throughout their school years; or it could be that during the later years of education, as examinations and assessments become more significant, there is less use of creative methods in lessons and more emphasis on 'cramming in' as much learning as possible. This was not clear from the research findings of 'Our Rights, Our Story', as the quantitative survey/questionnaire was unable to ask 'why' this might be the case; and any qualitative research in this area was done in isolation, rather than as a result of the findings of the 'national survey'.

**Some findings of the *Our Rights Our Story* research: Discipline** Article twenty eight, subsection two refers directly to the issue of discipline within education, and states that any discipline should be administered in a way which is '*...consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the ...Convention.*' During the design of the project and writing of research questions, the young people's steering group decided against asking any specific questions about discipline. They had the difficult task of creating a survey which was manageable in size, and which covered a range of issues; and as 'discipline' is only mentioned in one article of the UNCRC, this was an area which was excluded during the process of prioritising the research. However, during the

qualitative, open ended question used in the workshop sessions (i.e. *'If I were headteacher I would...'*), there were more than two hundred responses which referred to discipline within school. Therefore, this seemed to be an area of young people's education which is of significant importance to them; and which would therefore warrant further research.

Overall it was clear from the responses that young people do feel that discipline is important, and although there were a few references to young people being 'allowed to do whatever they want', predominantly young people had positive and realistic suggestions about how to improve the use of discipline in schools. For example, given the opportunity to be headteacher, a number of young people said that they would be strict and would really enforce discipline and school rules.

As well as some suggestions for what they would do differently, there were also a number of young people who questioned the effectiveness of the forms of discipline currently used in their schools, including detention and giving people 'lines' (i.e. Writing down the same sentence over and over again, for a predetermined number of times). A large number of young people suggested that a more effective means of discipline would be to 'reward good/positive behaviour', rather than just concentrating on 'punishing bad/negative behaviour'.

*'Concerns include: current punishments involve no 'learning', they are not administered 'consistently', and they fail to recognise when pupils are doing well.'*

*(Our Rights, Our Story, 2007. Page 37)*

Whilst these findings are not extensive, the fact that so many young people chose to mention 'discipline' in such an open ended question, clearly indicates that it is an issue which is important to young people and their educational experience. Without further research on this subject being undertaken, it is not possible to deduce whether the current forms of discipline being used are contravening what appears in the UNCRC; but it is clear that some work needs to be done in this area to make useful and constructive suggestions, as to how current systems can be improved. The issue of discipline

provided some unexpected findings for the OROS project. Its frequent appearances in young people's responses show that the inclusion of a qualitative exercise which gave young people the freedom to say anything they wanted, was really important and valuable.

Other related reports on the subject of rights in education

As well as *Our Rights, Our Story* the UN Committee on the Rights of the child were presented with three other reports from Wales: one was the Welsh Assembly Government report; the report of the UK Children's Commissioners (including Wales); and finally the NGO (non governmental organisation) report from Wales which was lead by Save the Children and called '*Stop Look and Listen*'.

*'Stop Look and Listen'* was written by the UNCRC Monitoring group which exists in Wales, and is lead by Save the Children. The report focused on the United Nations' '*concluding observations*' from 2002, and using expert knowledge and evidence attempting to track progress in Wales against what had been recommended by the UN Committee five years previously. Within the area of education, the Committee had previously expressed concern about the lack of support for young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered; *Stop Look and Listen* commented that five years on, homophobic bullying is still a major concern in schools. Bullying more generally was also raised in the report of the four UK children's commissioners who reported that many children and parents report that they do not know what to do about bullying, or that they have reported bullying to the school and the situation has not changed.

Another issue raised in both the NGO and Children's Commissioners' reports was to do with the need to involve children and young people more closely in the development of school systems, policy and practice.

*'Children are ... not viewed as key participants in education; discussions around improving education are often adult-based and fail to include children and their views.'*



*(UK Children's Commissioners' report to the UN Committee on the  
Rights of the Child, 2008, Page 27)*

Both reports also raised concern about the inequalities which exist within education, particularly for some minority groups (such as gypsy travelers); and following the recommendation from the 2002 *concluding observations*, both reports paid particular attention to the area of temporary and permanent exclusions. Both reports commented on the fact that despite the existence of a commitment from Local Authorities in Wales to ensure that those children and young people who have been excluded continue to access some form of education, this often does not happen, or is not satisfactory when it does. Both *Stop Look and Listen* and *The UK Children's Commissioners' report*, seem to indicate that there has not been enough movement from government in Wales to act upon the recommendations which were made to the UK state party in 2002, and in the *concluding observations* of 2008, we see that in part the UN Committee also felt this to be the case.

#### The UN Committee's Concluding Observations relating to education

Other recommendations made by the Committee in 2002 related to the seemingly poor levels of knowledge and understanding of rights and the UNCRC amongst children, young people, parents and professionals. The Committee was particularly concerned as this directly relates to a commitment made by governments within the UNCRC itself; article forty two states:

*'State parties undertake to make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike.'*

*(United Nations, 1989. Article 40)*

The Committee had a number of concerns within the area of education. There were positive observations in terms of the increased levels of literacy and numeracy amongst children since the previous reporting round, and in terms of the steps being taken to incorporate the principle of article twelve in education systems and practices (i.e. the child's right to have their opinions taken into account when decisions are being made which affect them). However, the Committee was particularly concerned at the differing educational outcomes for young people from different socio-economic groups. And

those young people in circumstances such as young carers or young people in the juvenile justice system. The Committee also recommended that much work needed to be done to reduce the alarming number of school exclusions, as this has an obvious effect on children and young people's ability to access their educational rights, but also may be indicative of problems within the area of discipline (Article twenty eight, point two).

*'State parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention'*

*(United Nations, 1989. Article 28 (2))*

Finally, with regard to education, the Committee expressed concern at the seemingly 'widespread' issue of bullying in UK schools (with no differentiation being made between the scales of this problem in the four nations of the UK). The recommendation made to government was that they should:

*'Take measures and set up adequate mechanisms and structures to prevent bullying and other forms of violence in schools and include children in the development and implementation of these strategies...'*

*(48.f, Concluding Observations: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 2002)*

Following the submission of all four reports (i.e. government, NGO, Children's Commissioner and young people) in 2008, the UN Committee's *concluding observations* made reference to the fact that there has been little move towards enshrining Article twelve in education law and policy. It did applaud some small steps made (such as making the existence of school councils statutory in Wales), but stressed that more needed to be done to safeguard this right and enshrine it in law. Concerns similar to those raised in 2002, about the inequality in achievement between different groups were raised again, particularly with regard to the fact that those children living in economic hardship tend not to achieve as highly as others.

The issues of discipline, exclusions and bullying were once again highlighted by the

Committee. They made reference to the potential impact of bullying upon entire educational experience of a child or young person.

*'Bullying is a serious and widespread problem, which may hinder children's attendance at school and successful learning;'*

([www.childrensrightswales.org.uk/concluding-observations](http://www.childrensrightswales.org.uk/concluding-observations))

So, given the amount of repetition and the similarities which exist between the *concluding observations* of 2002 and 2008, it would seem that progress in the area of rights within education is 'patchy' and possibly slower than desired. There are a number of themes which were raised in 2002, which were then raised in *Our Rights Our Story*, *Stop Look Listen* and *The UK Children's Commissioners' report*; and which finally appeared in the *concluding observations* of 2008. These include: bullying, forms of discipline, participation in decision making, and inequality.

### Conclusion

During this chapter we have explored the importance of education for the access of children and young people's rights. Formal education and schooling are services which are accessed universally by children and young people in Wales, as it is compulsory for children aged five to sixteen to attend full time school. It provides the opportunity for children and young people not only to access their rights which relate specifically to education, but also other rights within the UNCRC. This attendance at formal education also provides an opportunity to highlight (either for the individual child or young person themselves or by others) when and where other rights may be being violated or neglected.

The value of education for the individual child or young person is to some degree difficult to measure; the lasting impacts of the experiences of school are difficult to quantify. However, in this chapter we have noted sociologists who have recognised the importance of education for the individual in a number of ways. For example, in terms of a child's socialisation and acquisition of norms and values outside of the family; for many schools is the first experience of this. There is also arguably the opportunity for education to begin to balance out some of the inequalities which exist in children and

young people's lives outside of school; by providing everyone with the same level of support, and addressing additional needs for example. Others argue that education in childhood plays a vital role in preparing young people for a life of constantly learning and acquiring new knowledge.

Some argue that the biggest impact of education is on the economy. Marxists theorists for example, believe that formal education exists solely to prepare children and young people for their future economic life, and that education is shaped to prepare the workforce that future society will need (for example by teaching young people to be subordinate and accept the life that they have been given, without striving for change or to challenge the status quo). Also seen as a benefit to the economy is the role that formal education plays in 'releasing' parents back into the workforce.

This provision of childcare which comes with schooling also allows parents and guardians to 'get back' some of the own life in terms of social time and freedom. It can also be argued that the beginning of a child's school life is the beginning of their move to independence from their family. They no longer need to be with one parent or another, and can rely on other external adults and friends to support them. This independence obviously increases with age and levels of maturity – dependant on the individual child or young person.

During this chapter we have explored the development of education policy in Wales following devolution, and seen an increasing move towards a 'rights based' education system. For example the translation of the UNCRC into Wales '*seven core aims*' and the close links between rights and '*Extending Entitlement*'. We have also more recently seen direct echoes of the UNCRC in both '*The Learning Country*' and '*Learning Pathways: 14-19*' (2004) both of which recognise the importance of an education which meets the needs of the individual and allows children and young people to reach their '*full potential*' (the exact term used in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article twenty eight).

This chapter has detailed some of the work carried out by Funky Dragon, as part of the 'Our Rights, Our Story' project, on the theme of education. The research conducted was of a largely quantitative nature, and focussed on a number of key themes: including bullying, teaching methods and discipline. Other reports presented to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child included the NGO report: '*Stop, Look and Listen*' (written by Croke, R and Crowley, A) and the *UK Children's Commissioners' report*. Both of these reports highlighted similar issues within education in Wales; paying particular attention to the issue of inequality within education; bullying and its effects on young people's education; discipline and exclusions; and the participation of pupils in educational systems, policies and practices.

Finally, in this chapter we introduced the responses of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in their 2002 and 2008 *concluding observations* to the UK State party. From these recommendations, it is clear that the Committee would have expected to see greater progress between the reporting rounds, and that further work needs to be done in the area of education (amongst others).

It is timely that further research be carried out in the area of young people's rights in education, as it will begin to monitor progress against some of the UN Committee's 2008 *concluding observations* and recommendations. It is also necessary to undertake further work in this area in order to add some qualitative research and much needed 'meaning' to previous research; to allow the voice and experiences of young people in Wales to be clearly heard. For these reasons, research will be undertaken which seeks to answer the question:

**'To what extent are young people in Wales able to access their rights within education, as contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?**

## **Methodology Chapter**

This chapter will build upon the work, findings and outcomes of the 'Our Rights Our Story' project within the area of education; and identify the need for original research in this area to complement and expand upon the findings of Funky Dragon's 'OROS' project. This chapter will also explain the process of sampling undertaken for this original research, and detail the precise research methods chosen to carry out this research.

### **The work of *Our Rights, Our Story***

As described earlier, in 2005 members of Funky Dragon's Grand Council decided to undertake a research project in order to ascertain how well young people in Wales were able to access their rights, as laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. With support from Funky Dragon staff, the Grand Council elected a 'steering group' of nineteen young people to lead this project. These young people then undertook a period of background research, which involved looking at previous 'children's reports' from around the world, in an attempt to identify ways of working for their project. It was decided that the project would employ a number of staff to conduct the majority of the research. This was a difficult decision, as in the true spirit of 'participatory research', the young people themselves really wanted to carry out all of the data collection. However, they soon came to realise that in order to gather the views of as many young people as possible (this creating the most representative report), they may need some assistance (especially as young people have so many other commitments including school and/or employment). Therefore, the appointment of research staff was decided as the best possible course of action, with the young people's steering group designing all of the research methods, meeting to regularly monitor progress, and being fully involved in data analysis and report writing. The experience of involving young people throughout the research process was both challenging and exceptionally rewarding for those involved, and for the product of the research itself. This method of 'participatory research' will be explored further in this methodology chapter. During this process, the young people on the '*Our Rights Our Story*' steering group decided that the project should seek to meet with as many young people as possible

around Wales, and in a variety of settings. They also felt it important to clearly identify particular ‘specific interest’ groups, who may otherwise be under represented. These groups were: young people with disabilities; looked after young people; young carers; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning young people; young people who have been homeless; black and minority ethnic young people; young people with long term health problems; and young people who have been involved in the juvenile justice system. They also looked closely at the Articles contained in the UNCRC and attempted to focus their research on some main headings. For each of these themes the young people designed a number of both quantitative and qualitative methods, in the hope of discovering meaningful and ‘useable’ findings to report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. Throughout the research project, young people on the steering group were responsible for making all decisions, and also involved the other members of the Funky Dragon Grand Council where they felt it was appropriate or they needed their input. For example, the steering group was unable to agree on a name for the project and so held a vote with the Grand Council members and ‘Our Rights, Our Story’ was an idea from a young person who wasn’t a member of the group! Also the Grand Council were used to pilot the research methods designed by the steering group before they were used across Wales. These methods included a large scale ‘national survey’, with a total of fifty closed questions, around the areas of health, information, education and participation. These questions had multiple choice answers (often using likert scaling), and were answered anonymously using ‘klikka pads’ (voting pads). For example:

*‘I am supported adequately in school when making GCSE choices -*

- 1) Strongly agree*
- 2) Agree*
- 3) No opinion*
- 4) Disagree*
- 5) Strongly disagree’*

*(Our Rights, Our Story – National Survey 2007)*

This quantitative method of research gathered the views of over eight thousand young people in total. The young people on the steering group also worked with staff to design a number of 'workshop' activities which could be delivered with smaller groups of young people (up to approximately twenty-five maximum), and gather more detailed answers to open ended questions, and discussions. The methods used here were designed to be more interactive for the young people taking part. For example, one activity saw young people completing the sentence: *'If I were headteacher, I would...'*. This more qualitative research was completed with over two thousand young people in approximately one hundred and forty workshop sessions. As described earlier, the steering group members were unable to carry out all of this research themselves, so the majority of this was completed by research staff, although steering group members attended sessions where they could, in support. The research staff were required to regularly feed back to the steering group members about how many young people they'd met with, how many national surveys and workshops had been completed, and generally how the project was progressing. This allowed the young people to continually monitor and direct the research and ensure that it was meeting the aim which they had set out with. That is to give gather the views of as many young people as possible, answering the question *'To what extent are young people in Wales able to access their rights, as laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?'*

Once the data gathering part of the project was complete in June 2007, the staff and members of the steering group began the process of analysing the vast amount of data they had gathered. This was done with the support and guidance of Swansea university staff. Guidance from the United Nations NGO advisors, suggested that any report to the UN should be no more than thirty pages long ideally, and so the process of prioritising what to include in the final report was a tough one. The steering group decided that they would like to consult the rest of the Funky Dragon Grand Council about what to include in the final report. The steering group therefore presented the most conclusive of their findings to the rest of the Grand Council at a residential event in July 2007. Here members of the Grand Council were able to make comments about the findings, add insight where they felt they had some, and prioritise findings for the content of the



report. This was also a useful process for the steering group to hear the views of other young people at this stage, and to celebrate their achievements to date.

During the analysis stage of the project, members of the steering group had affiliated themselves to one particular area of the research (these being education, health, information or participation), and there was also one staff member taking responsibility for coordinating the work done within that section. This division of the group into 'subgroups' continued through to the 'writing' phase of the project, which made the whole task more manageable. The steering group gathered for a weekend and divided into groups to begin the writing process. It was a lengthy process, but the young people spent time identifying the quantitative data which they felt (and which proved to be) most significant. They then matched this with any qualitative data which was relevant. Next, they identified any comments or thoughts which had come from the Grand Council members in July. They then added any knowledge they had about current government legislation, policy and guidance on this area. Finally they made a recommendation based on the evidence collated before them. This process was very time consuming as the young people made a total of twenty three recommendations in the area of education alone. There wasn't time for the young people on the steering group to physically write each of the chapters of the final report; therefore young people advised members of Funky Dragon staff about what each chapter should contain and look like. Once the 'education' chapter of the report was drafted, it was emailed out to young people for their comments and approval, in order to keep the entire process as 'young people led' as was possible within the timescale.

The final report was launched on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2007 (the eighteenth anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child), along with reports from the NGO group and the Children's Commissioner for Wales (entitled '*Stop, Look and Listen*' and '*UK Children's Commissioners' Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child*'). Following its launch the report and more importantly, the recommendations within it were submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the Welsh Assembly Government. Although the report had

been written with the purpose of giving evidence to the UN, the young people on the steering group believed it to be essential to present this evidence to their own government, who they rightly believed have the power to make the majority of the changes recommended. Following this written submission, three young people were asked to attend the 'pre-sessional hearing' with the Committee in June 2008. Along with young people from Scotland and England, two Welsh young people gave evidence to the Committee in a 'formal' hearing (along with NGO groups and Children's Commissioners from across the United Kingdom); and three were given the opportunity to speak at an 'informal session' solely for young people and UN Committee members.

My role as Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Funky Dragon meant that I had a great deal of involvement with this initial research project. Fundamentally my role was to support the work of an elected group of young people whose job it was to design and lead the project. I was also responsible for carrying out some of the face to face research sessions with young people around Wales, writing up the results, and supporting the steering group in their analysis. In order to maintain an adequate level of focus, and to ensure the task was manageable and achievable; members of Funky Dragon management team were assigned one theme (identified by the steering group) each to be responsible for. This involved working with specific young people from the steering group on: the design of research questions and methods; analysis of data and collation of findings within that theme; the writing of recommendations based on the findings of the research; and the final writing of the report. So, in addition to my overall role of supporting the steering group; I was also responsible for overseeing and supporting the work of those young people who were particularly focused on the theme of 'education'.

#### The Need for Further Research

The work of 'Our Rights Our Story' conducted some useful and innovative research. Its findings were robust and interesting, and the project met its objective of providing a report of written evidence to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the Welsh Assembly Government. However it was unable to provide depth to some of its findings, and did not have the capacity to carry out a second phase of research based on

initial findings. Therefore, a number of its results highlight gaps in knowledge. In fact many recommendations made actually included a call for further research to be done. Therefore this current and original research will attempt to complement and expand upon OROS, seeking to add depth and value.

The findings of OROS provided some scope for some assumptions to be made; however it is not best practice to make assumptions; therefore time to explore further is essential. Also due to time and resource limitations, there was very little room for the OROS project to check and double check accuracy and clarify meanings from respondents. Therefore it is hoped that this new additional research will add weight to what OROS found out.

The answers given by subjects during interviews (and other research) are also open to interpretation by the researcher themselves during the data analysis phase. David Silverman (2005) highlights the need to be conscious of this in the planning and designing of social research.

*'...it is appropriate to build into the research design various devices to ensure the accuracy of your interpretation, so you can check the accuracy of what your respondents tell you by other observations.'*

*(Silverman 2005, Page 154)*

As well as being extremely labour intensive, this checking, rechecking and sometimes disproving of the validity of what a research respondent has said, also has ethical implications. For example, in the case of the 'Our Rights, Our Story' project; working with hard to reach and vulnerable young people, it would have greatly devalued their contributions and their time if they later read in the research report that the researcher (who they had developed a relationship and rapport with), not only didn't believe them, but had actually proved what they said to be untrue. This ethical dilemma was debated by young people on the steering group for this project; and ultimately they decided that it was the young people's opinion and point of view which was important to them. In asking how well they were able to access their rights, some young people may have given reasons and explanations which could have been proven to be untrue or inaccurate; however, the steering group felt even if the reasons *why* were sometimes

misunderstood or misrepresented by young people, the fact that they were unable to access their rights was evidence in itself. If young people perceive that they are unable to access a right, this itself is a barrier. Glassner and Loughlin (1978 – cited in Silverman 2005) carried out interviews with adolescents in America, to study their opinions about the existence and use of illegal drugs. They described the way they conducted their research as a *'methodology for listening'*, where value is placed as much on the subjective opinions of the participants, as there is on the verifiable facts that come from them.

*'If we treat interviewees' responses as factual statements, then it becomes crucial to ask: 'can we believe the kids?' Clearly the authors (Glassner and Loughlin) take this to be a serious question, arguing that, indeed, we should trust ...what the kids are saying. ... Calling their approach a 'methodology for listening', Glassner and Loughlin are thus centrally concerned with 'seeing the world from the perspective of our subjects.'*

*( Silverman. 2005, Page 157)*

This idea of capturing young people's perspectives on their access to rights is what the 'Our Rights, Our Story' steering group was aiming to achieve. After all, if a young person doesn't know how, or thinks that they cannot, access their rights – this is as much of a barrier to overcome as any other.

#### The Focus of this research: rights in education

Members of the Funky Dragon steering group identified a number of issues within education that they wanted this project to cover, all based on the articles contained within the UNCRC. These themes were: bullying; personal social education (PSE); the effects of education on their future; knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC; teaching methods; school transport; religious needs in education; careers advice and guidance; GCSE subject choices; discipline; and personal support and guidance. Each of these was covered in differing amounts of detail, and using a number of methods. For example, some questions were included in the 'national survey', and therefore generated only quantitative data; whilst other issues were covered in workshop sessions with smaller groups of young people; and others were covered by a combination of two

methods.

This variety of methods inevitably generated a different amount of data for each theme, some findings proving to be useful and insightful, whilst others seemed to generate very little. The main findings which young people from the steering group chose to highlight from their report when they met with members of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, were to do with bullying; personal social education (PSE); and knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC. They felt that these provided the most startling findings within education, and were the ones they most wanted to highlight.

For the purposes of this new research, it was essential to reduce the number of themes that would be covered. This was necessary to ensure that the research was achievable and manageable; and to allow time for the research to gain some of the qualitative depth of understanding, which the original OROS research was lacking. There were a number of areas from the OROS research which it was felt would not be appropriate for this additional phase of research. For example Personal Social Education was deemed to be fairly ineffective by young people involved in the OROS research; however shortly after the publishing of the report and recommendations a new PSE framework was published by Welsh Assembly Government. It was therefore felt that any further work into the effectiveness of PSE would be best delayed until the new framework has had chance to be embedded in schools and really take effect. There were other areas of the research findings which it was felt did not provide enough evidence to practicably be taken forward during this additional phase. For example, OROS found that of those young people who said they had religious needs, 44% of them said that their religious needs were 'never' considered within school. However, this is the only evidence at all relating to this question within the OROS research; there were no further questions asked on this subject, and there was no evidence which arose from the qualitative 'open' exercises which young people took part in. Therefore, in terms of choosing a manageable number of themes from the original research to focus on, this did not present itself as a priority.

In order to assist the decision making about which themes this research would cover, a

session was held with members of the Funky Dragon Grand Council, during which the group were presented with research findings and asked to discuss their thoughts around them. The themes which generated the most discussion and debate amongst the group were those of: bullying, discipline and teaching methods.

'Our Rights, Our Story' was able to provide some statistical, base line evidence around these themes, using methods such as questionnaires. However, it was unable to provide much depth and understanding to the statistics, therefore the current research will attempt to do just that; and will focus on the themes of bullying, teaching methods and discipline within Wales.

#### Qualitative Research Methods in the current research

The purpose of this research is to find out about the experiences that young people have within education in Wales. '*Our Rights Our Story*' (and other research) have previously been able to generate largely statistical data about the access of children's rights in education; however they have been less successful at gathering detailed accounts of young people's experiences, and in demonstrating the 'meaning' behind some of the statistical evidence. This exploration of 'meaning' and the individuals own experiences, is one which is common with 'interpretivist' or 'constructivist' researchers. This research involves not the acquisition of hard, indisputable facts; but the development of a conversation between researcher and subject; in which the subject feels comfortable and encouraged to speak directly from their own experience, opinion and perspective. This school of research is based on the belief that:

*'People, unlike the objects of the natural world, are conscious, purposive actors who have ideas about their world and attach meaning to what is going on around them. In particular their behaviour depends crucially on these ideas and meanings.'*

*(Robson, 2002. Page 24)*

Therefore in order to understand particular behaviours, experiences or occurrences; it is essential to speak to the people involved and build up an understanding, based on their points of view. David Silverman (2006) refers to this kind of research as '*emotionalism*' as it is concerned with understanding people's 'experiences', and emotions about given

subjects.

*'...concern is not with obtaining objective 'facts' but with eliciting authentic accounts of subjective experience.'*

*(Silverman, 2006. Page 123)*

The current research will attempt to discuss young people's individual experiences within education, and will explore (with the research subjects) the reasons and meanings behind these experiences. This type of data will prove useful in complementing and expanding upon other research, which already exists in Wales.

#### Participatory Research with young people

In the case of 'Our Rights Our Story', the project could be described quite clearly as participatory research, or even 'participatory action research', in the sense that young people (i.e. the subjects of the research) were also designing and leading the research itself. Whyte (1991) refers to 'participatory *action* research', as opposed to just 'participatory research'. Both of these involve members of the group which is being studied (in this case young people) being part of the design and implementation of the research, as well as being subjects of the research themselves.

*'In participatory action research ... some of the people of an organisation or community under study participate actively with the professional researcher throughout the research process from the initial design to the final presentation of results and discussion of their action implications.'*

*(Whyte, 1991, Page 20)*

As the word 'action' in the former suggests, the participants are then expected to be involved in whatever action results from the research (e.g. for themselves to make the improvements which the research has deemed necessary). In the case of 'Our Rights, Our Story', young people who were members of the steering group produced a number of 'recommendations' and suggested actions (along with their findings); however, due to the nature and size of the research (e.g. a National scale) the recommended actions were aimed primarily at government (either UK or Wales). It could therefore be argued that the 'OROS' project falls somewhere between 'participatory research' and 'participatory action research'; in that the young people were focused on 'action', and were a part of

that action so far as was reasonably practicable.

For the purposes of the current research, it was not possible or practical to have a young people's steering group with constant membership, meeting on a regular basis.

However, it was vital to maintain the participatory nature of the research. Therefore regular updates were provided to Funky Dragon's Grand Council about the work being undertaken, and comments sought about the direction and progress of the research.

Input was also sought from members of Funky Dragon at particular, fundamental stages of the research (for example in deciding which themes to cover, the entire Funky Dragon Grand Council were asked to comment). To as large an extent as possible therefore, this current research can also be identified as a piece of 'participatory research'.

### Strengths and Limitations of Participatory Research

During the *Our Rights Our Story project*, as well as the knowledge and skills gained by young people involved, members of Funky Dragon staff were able to gain enormously and learn a great deal from the 'expertise' of the young people on the steering group. This, along with the additional input from young people in the design of the current research has allowed for a much greater insight into the lives of young people; and allowed for the research questions and methodology to be much more effectively focused and appropriate for the research subjects. For example, when designing questions to do with Personal Social Education (PSE), young people were able to explain that not all schools teach this as a distinct subject and that many schools choose to cover it in a 'cross curricular' way; which may mean that many young people aren't able to identify their experiences of PSE, or may need help to distinguish it from other subjects. Therefore any research around it may require some preliminary questions to the school to find out how PSE is taught, and some explanations to young people during the research, which were specific to their school. Without the educational experiences of these young people from the outset, the research may have been in danger of asking a question which was open to confusion and misinterpretation. Whyte, Greenwood and Lazes, cited in Whyte 1991, say that:

*'...participatory action research leads researchers into previously unfamiliar pathways, involvement in the process is likely to stimulate us to*



*think in new ways about old and new theoretical problems, thus generating provocative new ideas.'*

*(Whyte 1991. Page 43)*

Young people are the 'experts' in their own lives; adults may think they know what children and young people need, but there surely is no-one better placed to say what they need than young people themselves; and therefore young people's input in the design and analysis of this research is vital (along with their input as research subjects).

Robinson and Kellett, (cited in Fraser et al 2005) described that there are undoubtedly some areas of life in which adults are more knowledgeable, and as such best placed to make decisions and recommendations. However Robinson and Kellett state that when it comes to '*what it is like to be a child*', it is undeniably children themselves who have the '*superior knowledge*'.

### **Power Dynamics within the current research**

Since this research is taking place after the completion of the 'Our Rights Our Story' research, and the submission of the report to the United Nations, it is also taking place without the existence of a designated 'steering group' (which was the most important element of the original 'OROS' project). This is because many of the members of the original steering group left Funky Dragon shortly after the completion of the research and report (young people are elected to be part of Funky Dragon for two years, so unless they are re-elected by their peers, they leave after this time). Also, since the initial aim of the 'OROS' project was to produce a report to submit to the UN in 2008, once this aim was met, the work of the organisation, and the young people involved changed focus. At the time of writing, Funky Dragon members are currently looking towards the next round of reporting to the UN (which should be in 2013 – depending on the UN Committee's schedule), and thinking about what research they might like to undertake this time around and what their project will look like. Therefore a new steering group has been formed, but young people within it are very much at the start of the process of gaining an indepth knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC; understanding all that was done as part of 'Our Rights, Our Story'; and beginning to understand the parameters of this next round of reporting. Therefore, it has not been possible for them to *lead* this

research in the same way that the initial research was completely led by young people. It has however, been possible for this research to be discussed with Funky Dragon Grand Council members, and new steering group members along the way. This has been useful to keep these young people informed and also to get their input into how this research should work. The danger has been that without as strong an element of 'participatory research', this current research may have resulted in the researcher being given all of the 'power' to make decisions; and as a consequence losing sight of the 'voice' of young people which was so present in the 'OROS' research. In order to attempt to reduce this risk, it was important that this research was based very firmly in the origins of OROS, and related directly to the findings of that work.

### **Validity in the current research**

The research done by *Our Rights, Our Story* relied largely on statistical evidence, and whilst it made an attempt to complement this statistical data with more qualitative information; the success of this was limited, due to the numbers of participants involved and some of the methods employed. In order to ensure a deeper level of understanding of the data gathered as part of 'OROS', and to add greater validity to its findings and recommendations, this research must seek to explore the reasons behind the statistics, and confirm their validity (or not, as the case may be).

In young people designing the methods of research and the questions to ask, Funky Dragon were able to ask the questions which were most relevant, useful and appropriate to young people's lives, and in the most effective ways. Steering group members were able to use their experience as young people living in Wales (as well as the experiences of other Funky Dragon Grand Council members) to ensure that the content of the UNCRC most relevant to young people living in Wales was included in the research, and they were able to write research questions and methods which would make sense to other young people, to ensure that they were getting the 'best quality' responses and therefore the most accurate results. For the purposes of the current research, Funky Dragon Grand Council members were consulted from the outset about the most pertinent themes for young people (in terms of accessing rights within education), and were asked to comment upon the methods which were to be used to gather people's views on these

themes. When it comes to the detail of young people's lives, young people themselves are the experts; they have the in-depth knowledge of the subject matter. This is an interesting change in dynamic from most, more 'traditional' research methods, where the researcher is often painted as the 'expert' in their field. Indeed, Adele Jones (cited in Fraser et al 2005) states that:

*'...it can be argued that knowledge about children is incomplete unless it takes into account the knowledge that children have themselves.'*

*(Fraser 2005. Page 114 )*

In the process of designing the research for 'Our Rights Our Story', young people were keen to keep the issue of 'validity' at the forefront of their attention. They wanted to ensure that their findings were robust and as accurate as possible before they presented them to government and the UN. This issue was key when it came to designing their research methods, and whilst they were keen to begin their work with a survey/large scale questionnaire, they were clear from the outset, that this method alone would not give them the 'validity' they were seeking. Surveys can provide a good 'starting point' for other research. Following the findings of a survey, it can be possible for researchers to use these findings as a 'baseline', and then to use more qualitative methods to explore the reasons why certain participants have responded in certain ways. This type of additional data would then add more value and worth to the findings of the survey; and this is the process that the 'Our Rights, Our Story' steering group undertook. It also allowed the group to begin looking at the validity of their findings. As Robson (2002) explains, triangulation is:

*'...a valuable and widely used strategy. ...it involves the use of multiple sources to enhance the rigor of the research.'*

*(Robson, 2002. Page 174)*

This system of working which allows the researcher to almost 'check' their findings and add depth of understanding to them is sometimes referred to as 'triangulation'. Funky Dragon attempted to undertake this process as part of its research by including a range of 'workshop' style activities with young people, which were intended to add meaning and further depth to the statistical evidence. However, these methods did not provide the data desired. One of the things the current research will do is use some of the statistical

evidence from *'Our Rights, Our Story'* as a prompt and catalyst for discussion with the young people in a focus group setting. The purpose of this will be to ascertain each individual's point of view on the statistical evidence gathered previously; and therefore begin to uncover some of the 'meaning' and explanation which may exist behind the quantitative data.

### **Ethical Considerations in the current research**

The ethical implications of research are slightly different to its predecessor. With 'OROS' it was explained quite clearly to young people what the value of their participation was (i.e. to contribute their views to a report which would be submitted to the UN and Welsh Assembly Government). This time around the purpose is slightly different. Primarily, this research is being carried out for its academic value; and whilst the intention is that this research will be fed into Funky Dragon members and ultimately to its next report to the UN, this process is not imminent and the evidence of their input will not be as immediate for young people taking part in this research. It is therefore vital that the researcher makes these intentions clear throughout the process of securing research participants, carrying out the research itself and writing up any findings and report.

An additional concern with this (and indeed any) research with young people, is that by asking for their opinions about certain elements of their life, a researcher may give the impression that they have some capacity or power to make the changes that young people are requesting or suggesting. Therefore it is always vital to manage young people's expectations, and be clear about what is and isn't within your (and their) power.

Many of these 'ethical' issues are not new to those carrying out consultation, research, or any kind of 'participation' work with children and young people. In Wales, there are nationally adopted and government endorsed set of 'Participation Standards'. These have been in existence since 2005, and came about when members of Funky Dragon expressed concern at the number of consultations they were asked to take part in, only to receive poor information and usually no feedback whatsoever. Therefore, this set of

seven standards was developed by Save the Children, and endorsed by Welsh Assembly Government and young people in November 2006. The standards include: *'information; it's your choice; no discrimination; respect; you get something out of it; feedback; and improving how we work'*. By keeping these in mind and in practice during this research, it is hoped that many of the ethical concerns will be addressed.

#### Focus Groups of Young People in the current research

The primary method of research for this work will be 'focus groups'. Uwe Flick (2006) writes about group discussion and focus groups as a valuable method of research, which in many ways is far preferable to the 'one to one' interview, saying that amongst other things, in a group, the researcher is able to witness extreme opinions, inaccuracies and misinterpretations being challenged and often 'corrected' by the group. In an interview with a single participant, the interviewer/researcher may take what the respondent says at face value, and therefore reach inaccurate conclusions in their analysis.

*'...the main advantages of group interviews include that they are low cost and rich in data, that they stimulate the respondents and support them in remembering events, and that they can lead beyond the answers of the single interviewees.'*

*(Flick 2006, Page 190)*

Despite the obvious worth of using focus groups as a research method, this type of research does not come without its challenges. Firstly, this research method requires a lot of time, both in the group sessions themselves and in the annotating and transcribing of discussions; there may also be difficulties in record keeping in identifying one participant from another. Secondly a researcher must be prepared to 'think on their feet' when undertaking this kind of research; as whilst a basic agenda for the session can be designed beforehand, the discussion will be shaped by members of the group and as such cannot be planned for. Depending on the demographic of the group, it may be necessary for the researcher to build a significant amount of time into the process for the group to get to know each other, and for the researcher to become acquainted with members of the group; only by doing this can the researcher be sure that the group situation is acting

as a catalyst for discussion, and is not actually inhibiting participants who feel uncomfortable within the group. As such this piece of research was designed to take place within schools, with groups of young people who most likely had already met and worked together. Discussions also took place with members of school staff before the research began to ascertain whether there were any issues which the researcher should be made aware of (e.g. any difficult relationships or specific learning needs within the group); and also time was built into the beginning of the research process to 'chat' about the research itself, asking any questions and airing any concerns. A number of 'icebreaker' games were played with each group in order for participants to get to know the researcher and each other a little better. Finally, refreshments were taken to each session and the room was set up as informally as a classroom will allow, in order to create as relaxed an atmosphere as possible; and make participants feel at ease. Unfortunately the limitations in terms of time and labour spent on recording and transcription is entirely unavoidable.

The role of the researcher/interviewer in research such as this is crucial to the value of the work and the experience of the participants. Uwe Flick (2006) refers to three approaches which can be taken by the researcher, and suggests that a combination of all three may be the most appropriate, depending on the group and the nature of the research. Flick refers to '*formal direction*': where the researcher acts more or less in the role of a chairperson, starting and ending the discussion, and bringing the group back to a previously set agenda. Secondly Flick refers to '*topical steering*': which sees the researcher taking on the role of chairperson, but also in addition asking for further information, explanation or opinion on certain points in the discussion. Finally, Flick refers to a researcher who may '*steer the dynamics*' of the group and the entire interaction: this role may see the researcher purposefully asking provocative questions or encouraging disagreements within the group; in order to observe and record the interaction itself. This final approach may also see a researcher presenting certain stimulus to the participants/group in order to appropriate a reaction (e.g. photograph). The focus groups in this instance were presented with findings and recommendations from the original 'Our Rights, Our Story' research; in the form of graphs, tables,

quotations and written reports. As such, it could be said that the researcher was directing the focus of the group, and producing a reaction. However, this reaction was recorded in terms of reaction to the data presented, and was not intended as a means by which to monitor and observe the interaction and/or relationships between different members of the focus groups.

Using the research method of focus groups and group discussions is extremely time consuming. It may involve spending a number of hours with a small group in order to build trust and relationships, and discuss all of the intended topics. Once the discussions have taken place, there is also a great deal of time needed by the researcher to write up notes, and/or transcribe recorded conversations. In the case of this research, a 'Dictaphone' was used to record some discussions; as well as some written submissions from the group themselves (which will be explained further in a later section). For these practical reasons, it was decided just to look at a small number of findings from the 'OROS' research during this second stage of research. Whilst there are a number of areas of research and findings from the original research project (OROS), which warrant more in-depth study; it was necessary to be realistic, and set achievable goals for this research, so as to ensure a positive experience for the young people taking part, and to be able to gather the most appropriate and useful data. Hence this research will focus on: bullying, teaching methods and discipline.

#### Sampling for the current research

For the purposes of this research there was no specific group which it was felt should be targeted; other than it would be good to gather the views of a range of ages; therefore it was decided to contact schools as the best means of meeting with young people. Due to practical constraints it was decided to approach only schools based in North Wales (as the researcher is based in North Wales). There was also a decision to be made about whether it would be beneficial to work with schools/groups who had previously been part of the 'OROS' project. Ultimately it was decided that there were arguments for and against approaching these schools exclusively, and so a number of schools from different Local Authorities in North Wales were approached; some of whom had been

involved in the 'OROS' research and some who had not. It had been hoped that this research would work with approximately four groups of young people; however, of all the schools approached, only three responses were received; and finally only two schools were able to arrange their involvement due to logistical constraints. Therefore in addition to these two schools (one in Flintshire, one in Denbighshire), it was decided to carry out the research with a group of young people made up from Funky Dragon's Grand Council (i.e. the Grand Council is an elected group of one hundred young people from across Wales; elected by their peers in school councils and youth forums).

Within the school itself, the decision about which young people should be involved was left to the school and/or students to decide. The only request was that there be a mixture of ages within the group where possible, and that the group was made up of a minimum of eight young people, and a maximum of twelve (in order to keep the size manageable). In reality, the schools involved were keen that this work was carried out with members of their 'school council'. In each instance this involved a group made up usually of two young people from each academic year in the school, who had been elected by their peers to sit on the schools council. Although this specific group were not targeted in the sampling for this research, working with them has its pro's and con's. On the one hand, these young people have been elected by their peers to represent them, and therefore, it is likely that they will have some knowledge of the views and opinions of others in their school. It also means that each group was made up of a cross section of the entire school in terms of age – which allows the researcher to explore whether age/school year has any effect on their experience of education. Finally, these young people should have worked together previously and have experience of giving their opinions and discussing things as a group; which should act as a catalyst to the group discussions in this research. On the other hand however, the 'representativeness' of this group is entirely reliant on the practices and ultimately, quality and effectiveness of the particular school council. As OROS itself reported, there are great inequalities in the way that school councils function across Wales, and until the research itself began, it was impossible to tell how 'representative' this group would really be. Ultimately, the schools and individual



young people agreeing to take part were giving freely their time, and the decision about who was involved ultimately lay with them.

|   | Gender | Year group |
|---|--------|------------|
| 1 | M      | 7          |
| 2 | F      | 8          |
| 3 | M      | 8          |
| 4 | M      | 9          |
| 5 | M      | 9          |
| 6 | F      | 10         |
| 7 | M      | 10         |
| 8 | F      | 11         |
| 9 | F      | 11         |

Table 3

| Group 1 |        |          |
|---------|--------|----------|
|         | gender | Yr group |
| 1       | F      | 7        |
| 2       | M      | 7        |
| 3       | M      | 7        |
| 4       | M      | 7        |
| 5       | M      | 8        |
| 6       | M      | 8        |
| 7       | M      | 8        |
| 8       | F      | 9        |
| 9       | F      | 9        |
| 10      | F      | 9        |
| 11      | F      | 9        |
| 12      | F      | 10       |
| 13      | F      | 10       |

Table 2

| Group 2 |        |          |
|---------|--------|----------|
|         | Gender | Yr Group |
| 1       | F      | 10       |
| 2       | F      | 11       |
| 3       | F      | 11       |
| 4       | F      | 12       |
| 5       | F      | 11       |
| 6       | F      | 10       |
| 7       | M      | 11       |
| 8       | M      | 12       |
| 9       | M      | 13       |
| 10      | M      | 9        |

Table 3

| Group 3 |
|---------|
|         |

### Implementation of Research Method

In the initial design of the research, it was envisaged that the researcher would meet with each group on a number of separate occasions over an agreed period of time (e.g. once per week for four weeks). However, the schools who responded were keen to dedicate a whole day to this work, as a 'one off' event. This would result in around an equal amount of time being spent with each group; but would change the parameters and design of the research sessions. Whilst this was not ideal for a number of reasons, it was decided that it was preferable to process in this way, rather than risk being unable to secure ample time in individual sessions. This 'one off' research day also almost completely eliminated the risk of participants changing from one session to another, or

from dropping out of the research altogether, which can sometimes be the case. As young people (aged between eleven and seventeen) would be involved in this work for an entire day, it was necessary to think about how to maintain their interest, and ensure that the day was enjoyable for them, so that they were happy to give their opinions. It may be possible to maintain a large group discussion with ten young people for thirty minutes, or even an hour; but not for five hours. It was also essential to account for the fact that not all of the young people would be aware of Funky Dragon or the UNCRC, and so there would need to be time spent setting the context for the work they were going to contribute to.

Taking all of these needs into account, a number of 'workshop' style activities were designed to form a part of the research days. These involved introductions to the researcher, Funky Dragon, the UNCRC and 'OROS'; as well as a number of small group and individual activities, and more traditional group discussions. This method of working is very much in style with the earlier designs of the Funky Dragon steering group, and whilst it may differ from the way that a more 'traditional' focus group would work (ie. based almost entirely around group discussion), it was essential to work in this way to ensure the engagement and enjoyment for young people taking part. In addition to this, the schools taking part were happy to see some 'learning' or 'educative' element to the young people's involvement. The individual, and small group activities were intended to complement the larger group discussions; as some young people may find it useful to 'warm up' and get their brains thinking about a subject, before being asked to voice their opinions in front of a group. The data recorded in these additional activities would also be analysed, along with recordings of the group discussions (copies of data gathered in 'workshop activities' and transcripts of 'focus group discussions' can be found in Appendix 1 and 2)

Working in this way generally kept the attention of the group throughout the day, and it was useful to be able to move onto another activity when attention was waning.

Working in this way, (with a mixture of individual, small group, and larger group tasks) also ensured that even quieter members of the group were able to have their input and

give their opinion; which can sometimes prove problematic in focus groups when one or a few members dominate the discussion.

On the other hand, working in this way was much more labour intensive for the researcher who had to design and prepare activities before the day; in contrast to a more traditional approach to focus groups, which might see the researcher arrive with a few bullet points which need to be covered, a notepad, pen and Dictaphone. Working in this way also meant that the day was very busy; and at times it felt there wasn't much flexibility in the allocated time to allow conversations to run their course, or to ask for further opinions or clarifications on a given point. The nature of only meeting each group for one day also meant that the researcher was not able to go away between meetings, analyse some of what had been discussed and return to certain points during the next session for clarification or further discussion. Working in this way there is the danger of misinterpretation, as facts are unable to be verified by participants; and also it feels like a wasted opportunity that the research was unable to gain as deep a level of understanding as it might have done, were this process of discussion, analysis, discussion, been able to take place. However, once again, this research project was bound by the parameters which existed, including time, resources and the access to young people agreed by the schools they attended.

### **Procedure**

As described earlier, it was necessary to mix the more traditional focus group style open discussion with a number of 'activities' during this research. This was done in order to maintain the interest of the group over the course of a number of hours; which would be far too long to sustain a group discussion. It was intended that the 'activities' would complement the group discussions, and introduce the young people to the themes of the research; whilst also providing some useful data themselves. Below is a detailed description of the procedure undertaken with each of the research groups.

Group 1

This session took place with nine young people on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2009, in a classroom of a school in Denbighshire. The research session ran from 9.30am until 1.30pm (with a short break of 15 minutes). The session included work around the themes of bullying, teaching methods and discipline; in the following format.

- **Bullying**

1. The group were each given 'post it' notes and asked to note down what they thought bullying was. They were told there was no right and wrong answer, but this was to get their opinion about what they think bullying is. The young people then put their 'post it' notes up on flipchart at the front of the room.
2. The group were divided into 2 smaller groups and asked to answer the following questions (ie. 1 question per group): 'What are the effects of bullying?' and 'Why do people bully others?'
3. A group discussion around the previous two activities and the findings of 'OROS' (within the theme of 'bullying') followed. The discussion was recorded using a Dictaphone.
4. The group was told the recommendations which the OROS report had made and asked whether they thought anything was missing, or whether there was any further comments they wanted to make.

- **Teaching Methods**

1. The group was divided into 2 smaller groups and asked to write down all of the methods of teaching they have experienced in schools (i.e. what happens in their lessons).
2. The groups were then asked to say which methods of teaching they experience most often, and which they experience the least (using a 'diamond rank' template – with top of the diamond representing the methods they have most experienced).
3. The group were then asked to complete a 'diamond rank' sheet individually, and this time to put them in order of how they would prefer

to be taught. They were asked to think about how much they enjoy something, but also how well they think that it helps them to learn.

4. The group were shown the findings and recommendations from the OROS report and asked whether they thought there was anything missing or any further comments they'd like to make.

- **Discipline**

1. The group were each given a 'post-it' note and asked to write down all of the methods of 'discipline' that they'd experienced in school.
2. The group had a brief discussion about the concepts of 'punishment' and 'reward', and how both can be used to ensure discipline within a school environment. In 2 small groups the young people were asked to explore the 'pro's and con's' of using punishment as a form of discipline, and then do the same for 'reward'.

### Group 2

This session took place with thirteen young people on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2010, in a classroom of a school in Flintshire. The research session was due to run from 9.30am until 1.30pm (with a short break of 15 minutes). However, on arrival at the school on the day of the research, the research was informed by the school that the session would have to end at 11.30am (thus halving its duration).

The session included work around the themes of bullying, teaching methods and discipline; in the following format:

- **Bullying**

1. The group were each given 'post it' notes and asked to note down what they thought bullying was. They were told there was no right and wrong answer, but this was to get their opinion about what they think bullying is. The young people then put their 'post it' notes up on flipchart at the front of the room.

2. The group were divided into 2 smaller groups and asked to answer the following questions (ie. 1 question per group): ‘What are the effects of bullying?’ and ‘Why do people bully others?’
3. A group discussion around the previous two activities and the findings of ‘OROS’ (within the theme of ‘bullying’) followed. The discussion was recorded using a Dictaphone.
4. The group was told the recommendations which the OROS report had made and asked whether they thought anything was missing, or whether there was any further comments they wanted to make.

- **Teaching Methods**

1. The group was divided into 2 smaller groups and asked to write down all of the methods of teaching they have experienced in schools (i.e. what happens in their lessons).
2. Due to the fact that the session had been cut from 4 hours to 2 hours by the school, and the fact that they were quite a disruptive group, it was becoming obvious that it was not going to be possible to complete all of the exercises as initially intended. Therefore it was decided to end the session by giving them an individual activity (rather than more group work), and asking them a fairly open ended question; thus giving the opportunity for them to comment on teaching methods, discipline, and any other issue which came to mind.

- **General Question**

1. The group were given a piece of paper each and asked to write the sentence: ‘If I were headteacher I would...’  
They were then given 15 minutes to write down whatever thoughts they had about this.

### Group 3

This session took place with ten young people on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2010, in a classroom of a residential centre in Powys, with Funky Dragon Grand Council members. The young

people were staying at the centre for three days to work on other issues, but spent two hours on this session, between 2pm and 4pm. The intention with this session (which took place after the 2 school sessions), was to gather additional opinions and ideas (data) from this group, where it was felt there were 'gaps' in the knowledge provided by the previous 2 sessions. As the two previous sessions had included a lot of work around 'bullying', this session included work around the themes of teaching methods and discipline; in the following format:

- **Teaching Methods**

1. The group were asked to 'brainstorm' all the methods that teachers use (in their experience), and to rank them in order of what they experience most often (in small groups).
2. Individually the young were asked to rank which methods they would prefer and would help them learn more.

- **Discipline**

1. The group was divided into 2 smaller groups, and they were asked to note down what forms of 'punishment' and 'reward' they have experienced i.e. What would happen if they'd done something 'good'? What would happen if they'd done something 'bad'?
2. A discussion then followed about 'discipline' in schools – particularly the issue of effectiveness of punishment and reward.

- **General Question**

1. In order to give the participants the opportunity to say anything else they wanted to about their education, they were asked to get in pairs and complete the sentence: 'If I were headteacher I would ...'

*Written records of the results of each activity and transcripts of group discussions can be found at Appendix 1 and 2.*

### Conclusion

This chapter has detailed some of the context of this research, and highlighted the need for this research to exist: that is, to provide an opportunity for the voice and direct experience of young people to be heard on issues relating to their access of rights within education. In order to allow this detailed information to be gathered from young people, and 'meaning' applied to their experiences, qualitative data collection methods have been deemed the most appropriate (as detailed in this chapter); and in particular the use of 'focus groups' has been highlighted as an effective way to engage with small groups of young people about the issues contained within this research. The chapter has also provided detailed information about the process of 'sampling' which was undertaken for this research; resulting in the inclusion of thirty two young people, aged between eleven and seventeen. This chapter has detailed the exact processes and procedures which were undertaken to complete this research, and explored the reasoning behind the decisions which were made.

Ultimately the 'guiding principle' of this research has been to have young people and their rights, firmly at its centre; to ensure the voice of young people's experience is heard and valued. In order to achieve this it has been essential to draw closely upon the work of the original 'Our Rights Our Story' steering group – particularly in the absence of a steering group specifically for this additional research. This chapter has demonstrated that whilst all decisions have been taken with these principles in mind, there have been times when compromises have had to be made (usually for practical/logistical reasons). For example, it was intended that this research would take place in one or two hour sessions over a period of up to ten weeks. However, all of the research groups actually ended up taking place in 'one day' events due to the constraints of school timetabling etc.

The aim of this research is to gather the views of young people in response to the question 'To what extent are young people in Wales able to access their rights to education, as detailed within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?'





The following chapters will detail the findings of this research and begin to assess whether this aim has been met.

## **Results**

The purpose of this chapter is to identify and list the significant findings arising from the research done with young people, in answer to the question 'To what extent are young people able to access their rights in education, as detailed in the UNCRC?' This chapter will describe the process of analysis which was undertaken in order to present these findings, and will explore the responses given by young people, within each of the three identified themes (i.e. bullying, teaching methods and discipline).

The data gathered is largely of a 'qualitative' and 'narrative' nature. However, there were certain activities undertaken which may allow for responses to be counted and the frequency of certain responses highlighted. This will be done where possible, appropriate and useful. However, the majority of data will be descriptive, as described by Denscombe:

*'Whether dealing with meanings or with patterns of behaviour, qualitative researchers tend to rely on a detailed and intricate description of events or people.'*

*(Denscombe, 2003, Page 233)*

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

The data gathered for the purposes of this research came in a number of formats. Some of the activities undertaken with young people involved them answering written questions, individually. Other activities required them to work in small groups and write or draw their answers onto flip chart paper. There was also a large amount of data gathered through conversation with the groups. These conversations were recorded using a Dictaphone, and therefore a large part of the analysis stage was actually transcribing these conversations from the Dictaphone, onto the page. This process of transcription is very time consuming and resource intensive; therefore some decisions were made along the way to make it more manageable. For example, sometimes a group moved from a discussion exercise (for which the recording was vital) to a group work exercise, which involved some other method of them recording their responses. On occasions when this happened the recorder was left running throughout the group exercise. However, a decision was made not to transcribe all that was captured during

this time. The response to the particular question was being gathered elsewhere through the activity, and it would have been almost impossible to transcribe as there were numerous people talking at once, in different parts of the room. For the purposes of transcription, each young person was given a number e.g. YP1, YP2 etc. This allows the views of a particular individual to be traced throughout a conversation and attributed directly to them. However, it should be noted, that whilst every effort has been made to identify each individual accurately, there may be occasions when one voice has been mistaken for another; or when it has not been able to identify precisely who has spoken (e.g. when more than young person has spoken at once).

In terms of analysing qualitative data, there are computer packages designed to assist this process. However, for the purposes of this research, none of these have been used. Due to the relatively small amount of data gathered, and the amount of resource it would take to purchase the relevant software; and the time it would take to become proficient at using such a program, it was decided that it would be more effective to analyse the data manually. However, it is vital that the limitations of the analyst should be recognised. Sadler (1981) cited in Robson (2002) lists twelve '*deficiencies of the human as analyst*'; including the potential for the analyst/researcher to become overloaded by the amount of data involved, or to analyse data differently on different occasions. He also describes that as someone who has a vested interest in the work, the analyst may have an inappropriate amount of

*'Confidence in judgment – excessive confidence is rested in one's judgment once it is made.'*

*(Robson, 2002, Page 460)*

This 'over confidence' may mean that findings are missed or misinterpreted – as the analyst has a fixed view of what they have found and becomes immovable from it. In analysing data for this research, the temptation to make inappropriate assumptions or drawing conclusions too early in the analysis process, has been a constant consideration, and has been avoided as much as possible. Once transcription was completed, it was important to begin to draw meaning from the responses and the conversation notes. Miles and Huberman (1994) (cited in Robson) list thirteen ways in which researchers can do this when working with qualitative data. For the purposes of this research, the

following have been employed: 'noting patterns, themes and trends'; 'clustering'; 'counting' and 'making contrasts and comparisons' (this list is not exhaustive). All of this began as a process of 'memo-ing' – that is, annotating the transcription notes, and physically noting ideas onto the text as they arose during reading. It was then possible to return to these notes when the whole document had been annotated – and either expand on original thoughts, or discount them (if it turned out that they were not significant or had been disproved later).

*'The researcher needs to go through the filed notes, transcripts or texts, adding comments and reflections in the margins alongside the raw data. As the analysis progresses, new things might emerge as relevant, or new interpretations might be given to the same extract of data.'*

*(Denscombe, 2003. Page 272)*

It has been possible to group the findings of this research into a number of 'themes', or 'concepts'. This 'thematic analysis' involves some themes which are predetermined by the purpose of the research and the question/s within it. For example, the design of this particular research involved identifying the themes of bullying, teaching methods and discipline. However there will also be themes which emerge from the data itself, and these will be identified throughout.

Robson details four different approaches to qualitative data analysis: 'quasi statistical' where the frequency of particular words or phrases is monitored; 'template' where 'codes' are identified before the analysis begins, and all data is sorted in accordance with this pre-designed 'template'; 'editing' where the codes emerge from the data itself and are based on the researcher's interpretation of the data; and finally 'immersion' where there are very few (if any) systems used, and any findings are based entirely on the researchers 'insight, intuition and creativity'. (Robson, 2002. Page 458). For the purposes of this research there will be a combination of both 'quasi statistical' and 'editing' approaches used. There are a number of activities which were undertaken with young people, for which it may prove useful to analyse the frequency of different responses. However, for the majority of the data gathered, the most appropriate method of analysis will be to see what themes and concepts occur from the text itself. The

purpose of the research is to explore young people's thoughts and feelings, and to find out about the details of their experiences within education; therefore it is vital that their responses do not get reduced to numbers and further statistical evidence; as this will be missing the value which this research has.

## Findings

### **Young People's responses on the theme of bullying: definitions**

It was a conscious decision for the researcher not to define or prescribe what was meant by 'bullying' prior to the research with young people. Ultimately this is a subjective term, and if a young person *feels* they have been bullied, this is likely to have an effect on them (regardless of whether other people may term their experiences as bullying or not). However, in order to assist further discussions, it was important that each group discussed definitions of 'bullying' and came to some agreed working definition. In response to the question: 'what is bullying?' young people's responses can be grouped in the following way: *physical*, *emotional*; *frequency and intent*; and *cyber bullying*. In the category of '*physical* bullying', answers included hitting, kicking and generally "consistent violence to others." Examples young people gave which relate to *emotional* bullying included: ignoring people, name calling etc. Other examples were "forcing you to do something you don't want to do" and "making someone feel bad about themselves." Although it can be said that '*cyber* bullying' is a form of emotional bullying, it was highlighted by young people as something which was particularly problematic, and also unique in some of the issues associated with it (e.g. it does not stop just because you are no longer in the bully's company); therefore the young people highlighted methods of '*cyber* bullying' in their own category – e.g. Text messages, emails, social networking. During discussions, there was some concern amongst the groups about the amount of bullying that can take place after school (whether face to face, or through text messaging, emails, social networks etc. (termed as 'cyber bullying'). This was a concern to young people as there seemed to be a feeling that it was even harder to get help in situations such as this. With one young person saying: "...but teachers would see it as school 'cos really you're not like in their ..." "...you're not in the grounds and ..." "...like in their sort of care."

Young people were keen to highlight the difference between bullying and other behaviour (e.g. fighting and joking), by discussing the difference in *frequency* when it comes to bullying. For example they defined bullying as “*something that happens all the time*”, rather than a one off incident; or “*consistent violence to others*”. There was also a perception that sometimes people may inadvertently upset someone, but that bullying contains a certain level of *intent*. For example, “*purposefully upsetting someone*”, is different to upsetting someone unintentionally with your actions. Generally young people seemed to feel that sometimes the line between ‘joking’ and ‘bullying’ was blurred, and that sometimes it was possible that young people misjudged the difference between the two. However, it seemed that participants felt that the issues of ‘*intent*’ and ‘*frequency*’ made bullying different (for example, if the ‘joke’ is always about the same individual this may become bullying). A number of young people also discussed that they felt that an individual should be able to ask for the ‘joking’ to stop, and that if it doesn’t, this may constitute bullying. However, it was also highlighted by one group that it may take a strong character to ask people to stop, as they won’t want to look as though they are unable to take a joke.

*Yp4: ‘we all call each other names and everything. It’s just a joke, but some people – even if someone is joking, like take it really offensive...and then think they’re being bullied.’*

*Me: ‘So when does a joke stop being a joke then?’*

*Yp2: ‘Once you’ve asked someone to stop it.’*

### **Young People's responses on the theme of bullying: effects**

Each group were asked to give their opinions about what they felt the effects of bullying were, or could be. The responses in this exercise can be grouped in two ways: ‘*feelings*’ and ‘*consequences*’. In terms of the *feelings* which bullying invokes, young people mentioned feeling scared, paranoid, insecure, unhappy, depressed and even suicidal. There was only one response which seemed to suggest that something positive could possibly come out of being bullied; that was, “it could make you stronger in the future.”

Generally the view was that bullying made people's self-esteem lower, made them less confident and more self-conscious.

Some responses to the question about what the effects of bullying are, were more to do with the actual *consequences* of being bullied (rather than just the way it makes a person feel). These included the injuries which people might sustain from being physically bullied. Other young people felt that being bullied may lead a victim to become violent themselves, and even lead them to bully other people. The most extreme consequence suggested by young people was suicide, and whilst they did not all feel that this was common place, they had all heard of cases where bullying had been the cause of suicide, and no one indicated that they felt this consequence was unrealistic. Other suggestions were that young people may develop a range of 'disorders', including; agoraphobia, mental illness, bed wetting, anorexia, self-harming.

Young people also reported that being bullied (usually by someone from school) who lives around you, may result in you having a difficult (if any) social life outside of school.

*"like when you've like gone home, got changes and everyone goes out to have a laugh ... to play and everything ... you run into someone who's bullying you, and ... you try to avoid them and it can be really inconvenient and everything and if you're scared of them and have to like change your way and everything".*

*(male, aged 14)*

*"..like if you're the type of person who doesn't go out 'cos you've been bullied."*

*(male, aged 14)*

In one session, a young female (from Year 9) reported that she was being bullied by a male pupil of the school. She reported that he bullied her on the bus, by throwing 'spit bombs' at her; and that he was also bullying her through text message and 'msn' (instant messenger). She reported that the worst thing about this 'cyber bullying' was the inability to get away from it. It was discussed by the group that even though you can ignore these messages, never respond, and even 'block' an individual (on MSN), it is always possible for them to find you again, and just reading the content of these messages is what is upsetting. She said that whilst this bullying predominantly took place outside school, it had an impact on the way she was within school (worried about

how she behaved when the perpetrator was around, being fearful when walking through the school etc.); and therefore an effect on her education.

### **Young People's responses on the theme of bullying: Reasons that people bully**

Generally, when young people responded to the question of why some people bully others, the responses seem to fall into two categories. Some responses highlighted the '*characteristics*' that people get bullied for; whilst others suggested that the reason people bully tends to be to do with the way the bully feels about themselves and their own lives i.e. *Self esteem of the bully*. The '*characteristics*' people get bullied for included: weight, height, hair style, hair colour, sexual orientation, disability, race etc. Predominantly there was a feeling that people are usually bullied for "just for being different"; and that there are a range of *characteristics* that can mark a young person out as 'different' (see list above for some responses from the young people).

In terms of the *self esteem of the bully*; generally there seemed to be the impression that bullies were not very happy with themselves or their lives, and this leads them to 'take it out on' other people. For example, it may be that the bully has been a victim of bullying themselves, or that they've experienced something which has made them angry. Other reasons suggested were to do with the bully wanting to 'show off' or appear in a certain way to the people around them. For example, some people said it may be about trying to 'fit in' or 'look cool'. There was also some feeling that often the background of the 'bully' may have an impact on the way they behave within school; either because they're not treated very nicely at home, and therefore 'take it out' on people in school; or because of: "*How your parents treat you. People might not even realise how bad it is – if they're used to it at home.*"

### **Discussions re: Our Rights Our Story findings on bullying**

Each of the groups was presented with a number of findings from the 'Our Rights Our Story' report, related to bullying. The group then had a discussion based on these findings. The purpose was to attempt to add some understanding and interpretation to the statistical evidence of 'Our Rights, Our Story'; and also to provide a stimulus for conversation amongst these focus groups.



When presented with the findings of ‘Our Rights, Our Story’, which reported that almost **47% of young people questioned, said that they had been a victim of bullying at some time in their lives**, young people had a mixed response. Some participants were surprised that the number was not higher; whilst others felt that it may be difficult to know what that means in practise, as bullying is quite ‘subjective’. One young person saying: *“I think that a lot of people think that they have been bullied.”*

One young person questioned how useful the question in OROS was because it asked whether young people had ‘ever’ been a victim of bullying, and so the statistic doesn’t give an indication of how ‘current’ this bullying is. Another young person in the same group also expressed that people have different views about what constitutes bullying, and so for example, a young person may have been called a name once, and another may have been beaten up every day for a year; but both would appear the same in this statistic.

Young people were presented with a statistic which showed that **almost 40% of young people asked said that there was no system in place in their school to tackle bullying**. When asked what young people thought about this it became clear that young people taking part in this research were also unsure about whether they had a school ‘anti bullying policy’, and that even if they were pretty sure that they did have a policy, they were unclear about its content. Young people reported that they knew that the policy said ‘don’t bully’, but they felt there was a lack of clarity about its existence, purpose and detail. When asked whether they’d know what to do if they were being bullied, one young man from year 8 responded: *“Not really. I wouldn’t say it’s that obvious. I mean everyone says there’s notices in schools, it’s on the notice boards; but where are the notice boards?!”*

Some young people spoke about existing initiatives in their schools to tackle bullying. Two groups reported that they do have a ‘bully box’, where students can report bullying anonymously. However, one group questioned the ‘usefulness’ of an anonymous reporting system, as it prevents any action from being taken. Both groups also spoke about the practical difficulties of a young person approaching the ‘bully box’ to report a

problem, when they may be viewed doing so by fellow pupils; with one group reporting that they are attempting to convince the school to set up an 'online bully box'.

One group felt that their school policy would almost certainly advise them to report the bullying to a teacher. However, this group felt particularly strongly that this would not be an effective or preferable route to take. Generally the group felt that teachers wouldn't respond effectively, if at all. One young person stated that: *"If you told a teacher you were being bullied, they'd probably just ignore you."* Another young person from the same group said that they would be told *"come back if he does it again, and then you go back and they're like 'come back if it happens again'. And then you go back the next day and they're just like 'what can we do about it?!'"*. There did not seem to be a sense or conclusion within the group that they knew what they wanted teachers to do about bullying, but that on the whole *"most teachers can't be bothered to do anything, or they just don't know how to deal with it"*. There was a general perception within this particular group that teachers were unapproachable; disinterested in young people's problems; failed to take bullying seriously; and were unsure how to help anyway. (Although it should be said that one young person was keen to point out that *"there are nice ones."* i.e. teachers).

In this particular group, one young person actually reported that an incidence of bullying had been caused by a teacher. He explained that a group of teachers were talking to each other about a particular young person and were overheard by a 'spreader' (i.e. A young person who 'spreads' rumours and gossip).

As a solution, one young person suggested:

*"Do you know what I reckon? We get all the teachers... every single teacher in the hall, to come up with a poster, and us ...y'know like we're doing now, like we're doing now, and we're doing all this. Maybe teachers do something."*

One group reported that their school had started a scheme called 'peer listening', where pupils who were being bullied could go and speak to older pupils for support. However, the group reported that not everyone was comfortable using this service because of where it was located (*"people can see you go in there and know why you're in there and*

*all that*”). They also reported that because the service was ‘under used’ it had since been scrapped by the school.

One young person reported that no matter what the mechanism for reporting and tackling bullying *“a lot of people don’t feel confident enough to do something about it.”*

Each group was told that *Our Rights Our Story* had found that ***young people who have been bullied are less likely to engage with after school activities.*** Overall there were mixed reactions to this finding. Some young people felt that if you were being bullied you might be more likely to engage with after school activities as this may be something you particularly enjoy, without the bully being around. Other young people felt that if you were bullied in school, you would just want to get home as quickly as possibly at the end of the day.

*“but don't you find that if school is the place where it all happens then you'd want to get away from there, and not be there for as long as you can?”*

Other young people felt that going to an after school activity might be an opportunity to avoid the bully at the end of the school day; and that depending what the activity is, there may even be the chance that the activity could help you (the example given was martial arts). Also, provided that the bully wasn’t also attending the activity, some young people suggested that this might provide the opportunity to socialise and make more friends. Generally young people weren’t convinced that the statistic provided by OROS was necessarily true to life and that there were a lot of variables that would affect people’s response to this question (for example, who else attends the after school activity and what the activity is).

*Our Rights Our Story* suggested that ***bullying may take place on school transport, as results show that those young people who have been bullied were more likely to report that they felt ‘unsafe’ or ‘very unsafe’ on school transport.*** As with other findings there was a mixture of responses to this issue. Some young people felt that whilst bullying can take place on the school bus, it was no more likely to happen there than in other places, and that *“... you can just sit away from the person who bullies ya.”*

However, other young people expressed the difficulty that exists in ‘getting away’ from someone who is bullying you on a bus, as you are effectively stuck with them for the length of the journey (usually twice per day, every day). Generally young people seemed to express that behaviour was an issue on school buses and that it was difficult for drivers to manage this because “*they’re drivers*”, and are busy driving. One young person reported that bullies do tend to behave badly on buses because *‘no one would disagree with them there.’*

One young person in particular reported that she experiences a lot of bullying on the school bus, and that even when she tries to sit away from the bully, she has things thrown at her, or ‘spit bombs’ used on her. Another young person told a story about a fellow pupil who no longer used the bus to get to school because he had things thrown at him, and would rather walk a few miles every day. Some people even reported that they had things thrown at them from a passing bus when they were walking home from school.

### **Young People's Responses on the Theme of Teaching Methods**

During this part of the session, young people were asked to list teaching methods which they had experienced, and then to rate them in terms of which methods they had experienced most often. For each of the groups, young people said that the most common way that they were taught was by a teacher ‘talking at the front of the class’ or ‘lecturing’. Other methods appearing high on the list were the use of ‘worksheets’ and ‘homework’. At the other end of the list (i.e. experienced least often) were ‘trips’. Other methods appearing low on the list were use of videos and ‘practical’ lessons.

Following this group activity, young people were asked individually to rate teaching methods they’d experienced in terms of their preference (both in terms of enjoyment and effectiveness). At the ‘most preferred’ end of the list, the most frequently occurring answers were: Physical Education, trips, practical lessons, and presentations (powerpoint). At the ‘least preferred’ end of the list, the most frequently occurring answers were: the teacher talking at the front of the class, homework and tests. Young

people described being taught by a teacher ‘just speaking’ at the front of the class as ineffective because you may not listen, and even if you do you won’t **remember** what’s been said; a number of young people described it as ‘*in one ear, out the other*’. One young person explained why they thought it was an ineffective teaching method by explaining:

*“It’s almost like talking to someone ... like talking to one of your friends... and like then expecting them to remember every single thing ...”*

Speaking about tests, a number of young people highlighted the ‘**stress**’ that they experience around the time of exams, and were concerned that this did not allow them to show themselves in the best light, as it becomes a test of memory. A number of young people suggested that it would be fairer if they were graded on their performance throughout the year, rather than one hour at the end of the year. In relation to ‘homework’, one young male aged fourteen suggested that it is unfair to have to take work home, and that it has a negative impact on other elements of his life:

*“I really don’t see the point of homework. Homework ... home’s the only free time you get from school, and 2 days off school isn’t enough to see your mum and dad. You already spend 6 hours in school, well you do need to have an education but I don’t think it’s right to have homework when home’s the only free time you’ve got.”*

This suggests that young people feel under pressure and **stress** from homework, coursework and examinations and that this stress may be having a negative impact upon their ability to learn effectively.

Young people discussed that the best lessons were ones which were **memorable**, and ‘**active**’, and ones which allow them to get as close to ‘**experiencing**’ the thing which they are being taught about; rather than just being told about it or reading about it. They suggested that this could be achieved in a number of ways, including trips and practical lessons. However, they were realistic about the costs and practical implications of going on trips, and one young person suggested that video may be a reasonable alternative:

*“I think you should have a video about the topic you’re actually doing, cos then you get to actually see what’s actually happened. Say like factories and everything ...instead of writing down about factories, you might have a bit more experience ...”*

They also suggested that having ‘experts’ come into school to speak about their real **experiences** of something (for example drugs or alcohol) would be more effective in helping them learn, than just hearing the ‘facts’ from a teacher.

The groups seemed to recognise that not all students can be happy all of the time, as each individual has their own preferences, strengths and weaknesses. Young people were asked to share with the group what they had put as their most preferred and least preferred methods. This prompted further discussion and debate, but also demonstrated the reality of the range of preferences, just within one small group. However, they suggested that there should be more *variety*, in order that everyone is ‘happy’ sometimes. One group even went so far as to suggest that following this session they thought it would be a good idea for the group to meet with lead teachers from each department, or ‘Heads of Year’ in the school, and discuss teaching methods; so that they could hear first-hand which methods that they prefer. They also suggested that teachers should be encouraged to ask young people about their preferences and which methods they feel are most effective, and that every teacher should have to do something ‘new’ and more active at least once every fortnight!

When given the opportunity to complete the sentence *‘If I were head teacher, I would...’*, a number of young people raised the issue of teachers, teaching methods and the quality of lessons; generally stating that they would ‘get rid’ of bad teachers, and improve the quality of teaching in their school.

### **Young people's responses on the theme of discipline**

#### **Methods of Discipline**

During this part of the session, young people were asked to think about all of the methods of discipline (including punishment and reward) they had experienced within

school. Responses included the *removal of privileges* (including having ‘stuff’ taken away, being put in detention, or being prevented from attending ‘clubs’). Other methods which appeared frequently in the responses were expulsion or temporary *exclusion*; being sent out of class and ‘*isolation*’ – where a pupil is removed from their class and taught separately from their peers for a period of time. A number of young people said that they had been shouted at, told off or sent to the head teacher or head of year to be ‘*told off*.’ One young person described how they disliked it when teachers used their work as a ‘bad’ example in class when they had got something wrong.

A number of young people mentioned particular *systems* which their school implement; including ‘concerns’ (where a certain number of ‘concerns’ result in parents being contacted); red and yellow card systems; and a ‘level’ system – where if your bad behaviour reaches a certain level, parents will be contacted. One young female, aged 16 mentioned a system known in her school as ‘standing on the bar’. She explained that in the dining hall there is a balcony, and that people who had ‘misbehaved’ were made to line up along the edge of the balcony (i.e. ‘the bar’) at lunch time, so that the whole school could see who had been ‘naughty’ that day.

Some pupils mentioned activities they would have to do in order to *compensate* for misbehaviour; for example, writing lines or picking up rubbish.

Only one group involved in the research listed any systems they had experienced which were to *reward* positive behaviour, rather than to punish bad. They gave examples such as parents being contacted to say how well a student had done; as well as systems such as ‘merit’ cards, stickers and passes to the front of the dinner queue. Other examples given stated that the ‘*reward*’ for good behaviour is getting good grades and being ‘respected by teachers’.

### **Punishment versus Reward**

‘Our Rights Our Story’ findings seemed to suggest that young people felt it was much more effective to reward positive behaviour than it was to punish bad behaviour; although it indicated that largely, school discipline relied on methods of punishment. Therefore, young people taking part in this research were asked to consider what they

felt were the ‘pro’s and con’s’ of using ‘punishment’ or ‘reward’ as a method of discipline.

In terms of punishment, young people felt there were very few pro’s, with the only positive response being that ‘some people learn’ from it. However, on the other side of the argument, young people felt that most punishments were a waste of *time*, often *unfair*, didn’t *achieve* anything, or result in any kind of ‘*learning*’. A number of young people expressed that they felt it was ‘easier’ and ‘cheaper’ for teacher to punish young people than reward them; and overwhelmingly young people expressed that they had experienced (or had knowledge of) far more punishment.

When it came to young people’s opinions of the use of ‘rewards’, the responses were more positive than negative. Young people felt that having rewards in place actually *encourages* people to work harder to achieve them, and therefore result in pupils ‘wanting to be good’. One young male (aged 15) described getting a ‘buzz’ when you are simply told you are doing well. However, the responses did indicate the young people have an issue with the way that reward systems are currently administered, with the general feeling being that young people who often misbehave get rewarded when they do something good. However, young people who are consistently well behaved, receive little or no rewards.

*“Naughty kids get more attention by doing 1 good thing, whereas if you are always good, you don’t get as many”.*

Young people said that they felt this was *unfair*, and affected the way they felt about their education, with one young female (aged 16) stating that:

*“It’s disheartening that you can stress and try really hard all the way through school, but you don’t get as much support and encouragement as those people who might be struggling or not even trying.”*

Responses to the open question, ‘*If I were head teacher I would ...*’, seem to indicate that young people really see the importance of discipline within education, with a number of young people saying they would create ‘stricter’ rules, or be better at enforcing school rules and good behaviour. There were a number of responses to this



exercise which mentioned the importance of '*encouragement*' as 'key' to young people's behaviour and achievement in school. A number of responses also mentioned that they would create a 'reward' scheme to *acknowledge* those young people who do well inside and outside of school; instead of allowing 'naughty children' to take up 'too much time'.

Generally young people agreed with the recommendations of the OROS report when it stated that pupils should be more *involved in the development of school rules*, and that the reasons *why* certain rules exist would help people to understand and stick to them. Young people also agreed that forms of discipline should involve *learning*, and that something should be '*achieved*' at the end of it.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has detailed the process of qualitative data analysis which was undertaken for this research; from recording to transcription, to thematic analysis. It has also highlighted the need for the researcher or analyst to be conscious of their own 'deficiencies' and potential to affect the analytical process, and ultimately the findings and conclusions of the research. This can occur for a variety of reasons including genuine error on the part of the researcher, bias, misjudgement, over confidence in ones' own conclusions etc. and must be borne in mind throughout the process of analysis. This chapter has also explored the findings of this research on three particular themes: bullying, teaching methods and discipline. With regards to bullying, young people's views led to a number of themes arising around the definition of bullying: *emotional; physical; cyber; and frequency and intent*. Therefore we can conclude that according to young people taking part in this research, bullying is the purposeful attack (either physical or emotional) on an individual or group, on a number of different occasions. With regards to the effects of bullying, this research has presented two main themes: *feelings* and *consequences*. *Feelings* include low self esteem, a lack of confidence, fear, sadness etc. *Consequences* include mental illness, eating disorders, and most dramatically suicide. As part of the research young people were asked to discuss what they felt the reasons were that people bully other people. Their responses can be sorted into two themes. Firstly *characteristics*; this is basically anything about an individual

which may make them different in some way to other people (e.g. hair colour, weight, height, race etc.). Secondly young people in this research felt that a major factor in the reasons that some people bully others is the *self esteem of the bully*, and the experiences that they have had in their lives (for example, if they have been bullied themselves previously they may bully others to make them feel better or more powerful; or they may have grown up in a home where there has been physical or emotional abuse). Of great concern in this research is the fact that anti bullying systems within school seem to be lacking; in existence, effectiveness and visibility amongst young people. There was particular feeling amongst the participants in this research that the reaction of teachers to reported instances of bullying was unsatisfactory. This research highlights young people's view that the experience of being bullied undoubtedly has the potential to impact upon an individual's experience of education. Whether this is because they begin to modify their own behaviour and actions as a consequence; or avoid school transport as a way of avoiding the bully; or whether some young people who are bullied become more or less likely (dependant on a range of factors) to make the most of educational opportunities such as 'after school clubs'.

The second theme covered by this research, and detailed in this chapter is that of teaching methods. This research would suggest that there is a 'mismatch' between the methods that pupils experience most frequently, and those methods which they think would help them to learn more effectively. One of the themes arising as a concern for young people was to do with how *memorable* lessons are (or are not). There seemed to be a general view amongst the groups that the more *enjoyable* a lesson is, the more *memorable* the learning. Some young people also generally expressed that they would prefer it if lessons could be more *active* and/or *experiential*; as this would aid their understanding of a subject and ensure the learning was more *memorable*. A number of young people also mentioned the pressure and *stress* that is involved with some teaching methods; such as homework and examinations; and questioned the effectiveness of learning which results in stress. Generally, young people seemed to be calling for a greater *variety* of teaching methods to be employed across the curriculum; and for the

opportunity for pupils and teachers to engage in a dialogue about methods of teaching and learning.

The third and final theme covered during this research was that of discipline within schools. There were a number of methods of discipline which young people had experienced, and they can be categorised in the following way: *removal of privileges* (e.g. detention); *exclusion* (e.g. permanent or temporary); *being 'told off'*; *particular school systems* (e.g. merit cards or letters to parents); and *compensatory activities* (e.g. picking up litter). Generally young people gave very few examples of rewarding positive behaviour, and much more common to their experience was the use of punishments for negative behaviour. Overall young people expressed that they felt many punishments used were ineffective, a waste of time and didn't achieve anything. Two young people highlighted instances where negative behaviour was highlighted to other staff and pupils; using *humiliation* and/or *shame* as a method of punishment. Young people taking part in this research generally were of the opinion that it would be more effective to encourage positive behaviour with *rewards* than to punish negative behaviour (although it should be noted that young people's experience of reward was reported as being limited). The type of rewards mentioned were not unrealistic, with one young person highlighting the 'buzz' you get from simply 'being told you are doing well'. Where reward systems do exist currently, young people seemed unhappy with the way that they are administered; the general view being that if you always behave well you are never rewarded, but if you often behave badly and then do something good, you receive a reward.

This chapter has demonstrated the range of responses which came from young people taking part in this research, and has drawn out the main themes which have arisen from the analysis of the data gathered. Issues of *bullying*, *teaching methods* and *discipline* undoubtedly have an effect on young people's experiences of education and school; a discussion about their impact upon an individual's ability to access their rights to education will follow.

## **Discussion**

The purpose of this research has been to gather the views of young people in Wales in answer to the question: to what extent are young people in Wales able to access their rights within education, as contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child? The catalyst for this research was the existence of previous research undertaken by Funky Dragon, which was produced in 2007, and presented to the Welsh Government and United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2008. This research was called '*Our Rights, Our Story*' and sought to explore a similar research question, although covered a range of settings (not just education). The *Our Rights, Our Story* research was largely of a quantitative nature, and whilst it made a valuable contribution to the area of children's rights in Wales, it also left many questions unanswered (as is often the case with primarily quantitative research). Therefore the intention with the current research was that it would seek to work with smaller groups of young people, and take a more detailed look at young people's access to rights within education; allowing young people's direct opinions and experiences to be heard.

Thus far this thesis has explored the development of human rights, and more specifically, children's rights; and has looked in detail at the content within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (which was established in 1989), particularly in relation to education. Education has been highlighted as being of great significance in the lives of the vast majority of children and young people in Wales. As a 'universal' state provision, there are very few children and young people in Wales who will not experience formal education; therefore, the impact of school and formal education on young people's lives and access to rights, cannot be underestimated.

In Wales, we see a relatively new legislative framework (since devolution from the UK Government took place in 1999), and a Government who has been quick to proclaim a commitment to children's rights. From its inception the Welsh Assembly Government publicly declared its commitment to ensuring that children's rights were held in high regard in Wales, and that policy development in Wales paid heed to the content of the

UNCRC. Since then Welsh Ministers and the National Assembly for Wales have made various reference to the UNCRC and children's rights in policy and guidance that they have produced. The most significant development for Wales has been that since the acquisition of more powers for Welsh Government (following a referendum in 2011), a new Measure has been passed which states that Welsh Ministers must give 'due regard' to the UNCRC when making legal, policy and guidance decisions in Wales. The process of implementation and monitoring for this process is still in negotiation at the time of writing; however the commitment to enshrine the UNCRC in law in Wales is to be commended. Whilst this regard for children's rights in policy is evident in Wales, it is essential for research (including this particular research) to determine whether this is reflected in children and young people's experiences of living in Wales, and whether this commitment in law is translated into the reality of young people's lives.

The current research has focussed on the setting of formal education; and within that has focussed on three themes, namely: bullying; teaching methods; and discipline. These themes were decided in conjunction with young people from Funky Dragon's Grand Council (i.e. elected body of young people aged eleven to twenty five from all over Wales), as they felt these were three of the most significant factors which effect young people's experiences of education. The research has explored these three themes with young people, both in terms of their direct relation to rights within the UNCRC, and their ability to impact upon the access of other rights contained within the Convention. The current research used qualitative data collection methods, primarily in the format of focus groups, with three groups of young people. Each group also took part in a small number of 'workshop' style activities which were designed to gather points of view and keep young people active and engaged in the sessions. In total the research included thirty two young people, aged between eleven and seventeen. The young people came from two schools in North Wales, and a group made up of Funky Dragon members. Initially it had been the intention to include at least one more school group; however access to groups was reliant on school staff and pressures of timetables etc. and it was not possible to arrange. Therefore a final session took place with a group of ten Funky Dragon members from around Wales.

This chapter will further explore the findings of the current research, and the relation of these findings to the potential access of rights for young people. The chapter will also look to set these findings and conclusions in the context of Welsh Government rhetoric; educational policy; and the development of the children's rights agenda in Wales. These discussions will be based around the three main themes of the research, which were bullying, teaching methods and discipline.

### Discussion on the theme of Bullying

The theme of bullying was discussed by two of the three focus groups taking part in the research. The discussions and activities (see 'methodology' chapter for details) were divided into a number of subheadings: *the effects of bullying; the reasons that bullying happens;* and *tackling bullying*.

#### **The Effects of Bullying: discussion of findings**

During the research, young people were asked to identify what they felt the effects of being bullied were. The first category of answers related to the *feelings* that the experience of bullying can lead to. Amongst the responses were that being bullied makes people feel unhappy, scared and lonely. Young people overwhelmingly felt that being bullied can lead to an individual having little or no confidence, and a low self esteem. It is difficult to imagine how anyone who feels like this would be able to make the most of the opportunities presented to them in terms of education; and further work in this area may prove useful to ascertain just what impact this 'low self esteem' has on young people's behaviour and achievements within school.

The other category which arose from young people's responses on the effects of bullying relates to the *consequences* which sometimes occur. These included a range of mental health issues and disorders, such as eating disorders and agoraphobia; with the most extreme consequence mentioned (by a number of participants) being suicide. These responses demonstrate the huge potential of bullying to impact on a range of rights contained within the UNCRC, and across all areas of an individual's life; from their

social life (or potential lack of it) to their health, and ultimately their right to survival and life, as detailed in Article six of the UNCRC.

- '1. State Parties recognise that every child has the inherent right to life,
2. State parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.'

*(United Nations, 1989. Article 6 (1) and (2))*

Obviously a young person taking their own life is the most extreme *consequence* of being bullied; however it is something which should be taken seriously by schools and government alike.

One particular effect of bullying which was discussed with young people during this research was whether or not the experience of being bullied is likely to effect whether or not young people take part in after school/extra curricular activities. Young people's views on this were mixed, with the potential for a number of variables to affect this. For example, young people felt that the type of activity may affect whether people attend or not; and also whether or not the perpetrator of the bullying is also attending may affect an individuals decision to attend, or go straight home after school. There was some feeling amongst the participants that if a person was bullied within school, it might be unlikely that they would want to spend any more time there than was absolutely necessary. Whatever the point of view, there seems little doubt that for some young people, the experience of being bullied *may* prevent them from engaging with extra curricular activities. This is of concern, as often it is these extra curricular sessions which are based on sports, the arts and creative work. The UNCRC itself states that education should be directed to:

*'...the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.'*

*(United Nations, 1989. Article 29(1)(a))*

Therefore, if pupils are (for whatever reason) unable to access the opportunities which education provides to explore and develop these talents and abilities, they are unable to fully access their rights to education. Previous research (*'Our Rights Our Story'*) raised concern about the fact that young people who were bullied were less likely to attend

after school activities. In their response to that research (entitled *'The Right Way Forward: The Welsh Assembly Government's response to the Funky Dragon 'Our Rights, Our Story' report and 'Why do people's ages go up not down?' report'* (2008)), Welsh Assembly Government made no comment or commitment on the recommendation that anti-bullying policies in schools needed to be extended to ensure they included after school activities.

One area of concern for young people in terms of incidences of bullying was *school transport*. Young people reported that behaviour generally on school buses is often unacceptable, but that with no supervising adult on the buses there was little that could be done about it. Young people felt that it would not be possible for the bus driver to take a role in ensuring good behaviour as he or she was otherwise occupied with driving the bus safely. Part of this bad behaviour on buses did extend to high incidences of bullying. One young person spoke about the inability to avoid or 'get away' from a bully on the bus, as you may be able to do at other times of day or in other locations. Another young person spoke about a friend who had suffered at the hands of bullies on the school bus, and had consequently decided they would rather walk 'a few' miles back and to from school every day (N.B. the Local Authority school transport policy for this area states that young people must live a minimum of three miles from their school to qualify for school transport; therefore we can assume this individual lived at least three miles from school).

In 2008 Welsh Assembly Government produced a new *'Learner Travel Measure (Wales)'* (2008). This measure included directives about the state of vehicles used for school travel, the safety of routes to school etc. It also instructed the development of a nationwide 'behaviour code' for those travelling on school transport. This *'travel behaviour code'* was written with input and consultation from young people, and includes sections on *'Your responsibilities'* and *'Your Rights'*. It also makes specific mention to incidences of bullying by instructing children and young people to

*'Tell a teacher, parent or driver about any poor behaviour or bullying you see.'*

*(Welsh Assembly Government 2009)*



Most recently a new Measure has been passed by Welsh Government, which builds upon the content of the 2008 Measure. The more recent legislation, entitled: '*Safety on Learner Transport (Wales) Measure*' (2011), primarily includes the new requirement that all school buses are fitted with seatbelts. However, this measure also contains a section about 'supervising adults' on school transport. As this is a Measure, its content is fairly broad and quite general, and the content relating to supervisory adults, simply means that Welsh Government now have the power to write guidance which require that there must be supervisory adults on school transport – **if** they wish to do so, at some point in the future.

### **The reasons that bullying happens: discussion of findings**

The responses given by participants in this area of the research fall into two categories: *characteristics* and *self esteem of the bully*. In terms of the *characteristics* which some people get bullied for, young people mentioned a whole range of (largely physical) traits which could result in an individual being bullied (including: weight, height, hair colour etc.); and generally concluded that it could be anything that makes a person '*different*'. This is completely at odds with the principle of 'non discrimination' which runs throughout the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and appears explicitly in Article two.

*'State parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's ... race, colour, sex, language, religion, political ... national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.'*

*(United Nations, 1989. Article 2(1))*

Issues of bullying of particular groups were raised by both the NGO Group from Wales, and The UK Children's Commissioners in their reports to the United Nations Committee in 2008. In these reports they particularly highlight the high level of bullying and discrimination suffered by young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered; and mention particular concern at the occurrences of bullying within schools and colleges; and the unsatisfactory response from school staff. Referring to research by a charity called Stonewall the Children's Commissioners report that:

*'Half of teachers do not intervene when they hear homophobic language and 30% of lesbian and gay pupils say that adults – teachers or support staff – are responsible for homophobic incidents in their school.'*

*(UK Children's Commissioners, 2008. Page 12)*

(Stonewall is a UK wide organisation which campaigns and lobbies government on issues of equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people. It also has various educative and research projects on this matter).

Whilst the Commissioner's report refers to the UK as a whole, it does include findings from Wales, and was endorsed as a UK wide concern by the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

The discrimination which research would suggest is fairly common place within schools is entirely contradictory to the aims of education laid out in the text of the UNCRC. For example, Article twenty nine refers to an education which should prepare children and young people for a life in society in '*...the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of the sexes and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups...*'. If this high level of prejudice and discrimination is present in a large proportion of schools, it would seem that education is largely failing to meet what is required of it from Article twenty nine. The '*Personal Social Education Framework for 7 – 19 year olds in Wales*' (2008) refers to issues of respect and discrimination, stating that

*'Learners need to be able to make and maintain friendships, deal with conflict, challenge stereotyping and prejudice...'*

*(Welsh Assembly Government, 2008, Page11)*

There are also a number of similar references throughout the framework document. However, research findings from '*Our Rights, Our Story*' (2008) suggest that generally young people's experience of Personal Social Education (PSE) is not positive. This research found that approximately 55% of young people said that PSE was either not useful to them, or they were unsure of whether it was useful or not. Young people also

stated that there was little 'value' or 'importance' placed on PSE as a subject because it did not have a qualification to work towards, and was not taught by specialist teachers (as other subjects are); therefore it was low on the list of priorities for students and teachers alike. If this view of PSE is accurate, it is of little use that the PSE Framework aims to educate about respect and tackle discrimination – as the lessons are ineffective. Therefore further work may be necessary in this area to improve the standard of PSE teaching in schools, and to include work around equality and respect in all other parts of the curriculum.

With regards to the *self esteem of the bully*, young people felt that generally there is usually some negative experience or experiences which have happened to an individual which lead them to bully other people. They cited the experience of having been bullied themselves as one possible cause; leading to an individual wanting to feel 'better' and more 'powerful' than someone else. Participants in this research also felt that experiences at home may have a part to play in whether a person becomes a bully or not. For example, if a child is brought up around violence and/or abuse; they may grow up to think that this behaviour is somehow acceptable or normal; or they may grow up with feelings of anger or inadequacy, which consequently they take out on someone else. There is no doubt an infinite number of reasons why someone may choose to bully others, and often there may be no one particular attributable reason, but a combination of feelings, experiences and events. However, findings in this area do seem to demonstrate effectively the potential impact of removing or denying access to a particular right or rights. For example, if a child is denied the right to freedom from abuse and neglect (Article nineteen) at home; this can result in them behaving in a way which denies the rights of others (by bullying them).

### **Tackling Bullying in schools: discussion of findings**

An area of concern in previous research (including *'Our Rights, Our Story'*, *'Stop, look, listen'* and *'The UK Children's Commissioner's report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child'*) has been the way that bullying is dealt with and the effectiveness and existence of anti bullying systems in schools. Both *OROS* and the Commissioner's

report highlighted a lack of clarity about what the 'correct' procedure is when a pupil is being bullied; with *OROS* demonstrating that 40% of young people asked thought that there was no anti bullying policy in their school at all. The current research appears to concur with these concerns.

In 2003 the Welsh Assembly Government produced a document called *'Respecting Others: Anti bullying guidance'*, which stated that all primary and secondary schools in Wales must have a 'whole school' anti bullying policy in place, and that students should be involved in the development of this policy. In 2006 Welsh Assembly Government undertook an evaluation exercise to determine the state of these policies across Wales. The purpose of this evaluation was to determine how well existing policies reflected the guidance contained within *'Respecting Others'*. Letters were sent to all schools in Wales, asking them to submit copies of their anti-bullying policies; however there was a disappointing response, with just a quarter of all schools submitting. In terms of pupil involvement in the writing of policies, the evaluation showed that 95% of the policies viewed made no mention of consultation with pupils (though it was unclear whether this was because it had not taken place, or was just not written up). Generally, the evaluation exercise developed a scoring matrix, and concluded that 21% of policies viewed were 'good' or 'outstanding'; 46% were 'satisfactory'; and 33% were either 'unsatisfactory' or had 'significant problems'. (*'Evaluation of Anti-Bullying Policies in Schools in Wales'*, Welsh Assembly Government, 2006).

The current research findings of this work show that regardless of government policy and evaluation, there is still a considerable lack of knowledge about anti bullying policies within schools; and that even where pupils are conscious of their school policies existence, they largely don't know what it says. This would seem to indicate, that contrary to the Welsh Assembly Government's direction that students should be involved in the writing and development of a whole school policy; and contrary to the guiding principle of 'participation' within the UNCRC, children and young people are not being included in the process of consulting on, and actually writing school policies. In order to develop an effective system for preventing and tackling bullying, it is

essential that schools listen to the views of their students, or else risk creating a system which is not fit for purpose. For example, one young person in the current research spoke about the existence of a 'peer listening' service where students can go at break and lunch times if they are being bullied; however, the school stopped it because it was underused. There was some feeling in the groups that location of services such as this and others (e.g. anonymous 'bully boxes' where people can 'post' concerns) was part of the reason why they were underused: no one wants to be **seen** to use these services. As mentioned previously children and young people are *the* experts in their own lives and if their views were heard from the inception of such schemes, they may prove much more effective in the long run.

There was a concerning number of young people in this research who did not seem to have much faith or confidence in the fact that reporting bullying to a teacher would help the situation. Some young people felt that many teachers genuinely did not care about bullying and would dismiss reports rather than deal with them. Other young people seemed to feel that the problem was that teachers genuinely did not know **how** to deal with bullying, and were therefore inactive about it. This finding is similar to a point made in *'The UK Children's Commissioner's report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child'*. Here we read about concern not just from children and young people themselves, but also from parents who have reported incidences of bullying to schools, only to feel that nothing has changed and the situation has not improved. Young people in the current research were not able to produce any obvious answers about precisely what a teacher should do if bullying is reported to them (although they felt that more training would help); which suggests that there may be greater need for discussions to take place between pupils and teachers to develop a common understanding and agreed course of action.

#### Discussion on the theme of Teaching Methods

As referred to in the earlier chapter (entitled *'The Role of Education in the Accessing of Rights'*) the role of the teacher and the methods they employ during lessons, has a significant effect on pupils' educational experiences. Woods (1979) concluded that a

variety of methods and the freedom to choose different options at different times were really important to students; along with a teacher who was helpful and offered thorough, accessible explanations.

Three main areas have emerged within the findings: *Variety in teaching methods; the stress and pressure of education; and the participation of young people.*

### **Variety in teaching methods: discussion of findings**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article twenty eight, clearly states that governments should '*encourage the development of different forms of secondary education...make them available and accessible to every child ...*'. As well as this, Article twenty nine states that education should focus on:

*'...the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.'*

*(United Nations, 1989. Article 29(1)(a))*

As every child and young person is an individual, this is without doubt, a monumental task for schools. However, it does appear to place a responsibility on schools to account for individual needs, strengths, weaknesses and requirements. Welsh Assembly Government took this commitment further in 2004, in their document '*14 – 19 Learning Pathways*' where they recognised the individuality of each student, and committed to providing '*learning coaches*' across Wales who would work with young people to identify their own unique '*learning pathway*' through education, and support them to follow this (for example, this may involve a young person attending particular lessons away from their usual campus to access particular lessons they are interested in). This system and policy shows a clear commitment by the government in Wales to account for individual need and preference within education.

However, this research would suggest that this is not being translated to the classroom within secondary schools. Young people taking part in this research suggested that there was a lack of variety in the methods used across the curriculum, in their experience. With between twenty and thirty students per class in most schools, it would seem that

the **only** way to ensure that each individual is accounted for is to use a variety of methods; but according to the majority of young people involved in this research, that simply is not happening.

Not only did young people report a lack of variety in the methods that teachers use in lessons; but the findings also demonstrate an apparent 'mismatch' between the methods that young people experience most often, and those which they feel are most effective in helping them learn. For the purposes of the research young people were asked to list all of the teaching methods that they've experienced in school, and then to rank them in order of which they experienced most often. The methods which came out as the most commonly used were 'lecturing', 'the teacher talking to the class', 'worksheets' and 'homework'. Secondly, young people were asked to list (in order) their preferred methods of teaching (N.B. 'preferred' was explained as not just the most enjoyable, but those methods which help you learn the most). At the top of people's preferences were 'trips' and 'practical lessons', and at the bottom were 'the teacher talking to the class', 'homework' and 'tests'. Young people's reasoning for the preferences were quite simple: generally they preferred more active lessons where they 'experienced' that which they were learning about (to whatever degree possible) as more enjoyable and more memorable. Many young people spoke about the method of lecturing as something which was an ineffective method as they were unable to remember what they had been taught. As referred to previously in the chapter entitled *'The Role of Education in the Accessing of Rights (page 43)'*, one of the great strengths of a universally provided education system, is that it can begin to address inequalities in society, and can work to benefit all 'types' of young people. Arguably, this apparent lack of variety within current methods of teaching, demonstrates a system which 'favours' or more greatly benefits particular young people, over others i.e. more academic young people with particular learning styles. Monika E. Korig (2007) argues that a large responsibility for identifying learning styles and appropriate methods of teaching lies with the teacher themselves.

*'Though the teacher him or herself, being responsible for his or her own learning and personal development, there are possibilities for the educator to support the process of finding out which way/which ways are working best;*

*introducing some uncommon ways of gaining knowledge which may suit this very student and helping the student to become more effective in learning.'*

*(Konig, 2007. Page 1)*

Therefore it is vital that more time is spent with young people to identify the ways in which they learn most effectively, so that lessons can be adapted accordingly and the learning outcomes of the lesson met.

### **The stress and pressure of education: discussion of findings**

A number of young people during the research (both in the section on teaching methods and discipline) mentioned feelings of '*stress*' and '*pressure*' that exist at various stages of their education. Young people mentioned the stress of examinations and tests as a means of learning, and there was some suggestion that they felt tests were an unfair and unrealistic way to measure learning, as they do nothing more than test an individual's ability to 'remember' things on the day. A number of young people suggested that it would be more effective and appropriate to assess people's performance and understanding of a subject at various points, and through a range of means; rather than experience the 'stress' of everything resting on an exam.

Another area which resulted in young people feeling stressed was homework (including coursework); and there was some concern that considering the number of hours spent in school during the week (compared to the number of hours spent doing other things), it was unfair to ask young people to spend further time on school work at home. One young person mentioned the infringement this homework had on the time he had available to spend with his family.

This poses an interesting consideration about the balance of the access of rights. Is there a point where there is too much education? Children and young people have a range of rights detailed within the UNCRC, not just those relating to education; and is it right that education can prevent a young person's access to other rights? The UNCRC says that children and young people have rights which relate to social time, play, family, health etc. It can be argued that at its most serious, the stress and pressure of school has a detrimental effect on a young person's mental and physical health; and that 'too much'



education may leave little or no time for other rights to be accessed, such as play and family life. The Welsh Assembly Government's *'Extending Entitlement: Support for 11 to 25 year olds in Wales'* (2000) says that every young person has a basic entitlement to *'...recreational and social activities...'* and

*'...sporting, artistic, musical and outdoor experiences to develop talents, broaden horizons and promote rounded perspectives ...'*

*(Welsh Assembly Government, 2000. Page 10)*

With the amount of time spent by young people in school, and the time spent on coursework and other homework once the school day has ended; there is the potential for these entitlements to become overshadowed or neglected by the entitlement to education and training.

### **Participation of young people: discussion of findings**

In the UK Children's Commissioner's report to the UN Committee in 2008, there was a concern raised about the fact that children and young people's views are largely not considered within education, and that whilst there has been some progress in recent years (for example the statutory requirement for each school to have a student council in Wales), there is still much work which needs to be done to ensure that children and young people's voices are really listened to.

*'Children are ... not viewed as key participants in education: discussions around improving education are often adult based and fail to include children and their views.'*

*(UK Children's Commissioners, 2008. Page 27)*

The current research findings would also indicate that on issues of curriculum and teaching methods, young people's views are rarely sought, listened to or considered. As described earlier, Welsh Assembly Government seem to have recognised the individuality of students (from aged fourteen to nineteen at least), in their *'Learning Pathways: 14-19'* (2004) document, and also appear to be directing educational establishments to involve learners in the design of their own unique 'path'. However, it appears this direction for the participation of pupils falls short of consulting them about the methods they would prefer and learn best from.

It became statutory for all schools in Wales to have a 'school council' in December 2005. In addition to this, Welsh Assembly Government's '*School Effectiveness Framework: Building Learning Communities Together*' (2008) states that

*'Evidence shows that children and young people learn most effectively when they are involved in decisions about their learning ... It is therefore, our intention that use of the Framework should involve children and young people as active participants in improving school effectiveness.'*

*(Welsh Assembly Government, 2008. Page 5)*

The School Effectiveness team within Welsh Assembly Government has even produced a '*guide to pupil participation*', clearly defining the importance of the voice of children and young people in creating better schools, and how this process can work in practice. In this guide, the Welsh Government clearly state that one of the ways that pupil participation can improve education is through being

*'...involved in decisions about teaching and learning. E.g. what they learn and how'*

*(Welsh Assembly Government, 2008. Page 2)*

The current research indicates that despite encouragement from government in Wales, this participation of children and young people, and their active involvement in making decisions about teaching and learning, simply is not happening.

Young people involved in this research were incredibly realistic in their suggestions for improvements in this area. They recognised that not everyone could be happy all of the time, as they all had such varying wants and needs in terms of their learning. However, what they felt was realistic and a constructive idea was that teachers be encouraged to '*try out something new*' every so often, and that teachers discuss learning styles and teaching methods with their pupils.

### Discussion on the theme of Discipline

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child makes specific mention of the issue of school discipline in Article twenty eight. It states that

*'State parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.'*

*(United Nations, 1989. Article 28.3)*

This makes it clear that any discipline used in schools must not contravene any other parts of the UNCRC and that it must not do anything to compromise the 'dignity' of those children and young people involved.

### **Human Dignity in School Discipline: discussion of findings**

For the purposes of the current research young people engaged in group discussions about the subject of discipline. They were asked to discuss some of the methods of 'discipline' that they had experienced, but were not asked anything specifically about the issue of 'dignity' within discipline. However, in the course of the discussions, there were two examples given by young people during the research that seemed to indicate that an individual's dignity is not always respected in the administration of school discipline. One young person mentioned that he was unhappy when his work was used as a 'bad' example by teachers. When asked to expand on this further, he explained that there had been occasions when he had got something wrong, or made an error in his work; only for this work to be shown to the rest of the class as an example of how **not** to answer the question or complete the work. There is no doubt that this method involves a certain degree of humiliation, embarrassment and shame for the individual involved; which seems contradictory to the spirit of 'dignity' mentioned in the UNCRC.

Another young person discussed a system which existed in her school known as *'the bar'*. This involved everyone who had been 'in trouble' throughout the school on a particular day, being lined up along a balcony (i.e. 'The bar') at lunch time, so that all other teachers and staff can see who has been misbehaving. Again, this method seems to involve a good degree of humiliation and shame for the young people involved, and seems entirely at odds with the spirit of the UNCRC, and its direct reference to discipline.

### **Methods of 'punishment': discussion of findings**

During the research, young people were asked to list all of the methods of 'discipline' that they had experienced in school. Overwhelmingly it seems that young people are more familiar with methods of 'punishment' than any other form of discipline or behaviour management such as reward or incentives. The methods of punishment highlighted by young people can fall into the following categories: ***removal of privileges; exclusion; being 'told off'; particular school systems; compensatory activities***. Generally, young people felt that the methods used most commonly were a 'waste of time', 'didn't achieve anything' and didn't result in them learning anything as a consequence.

One of the methods mentioned most frequently by young people in this research was that of 'exclusion'; this was in terms of permanent exclusion from a school; temporary exclusion, where a young person is asked not to attend school for a period of time; or 'internal exclusion' (also referred to as 'isolation'), where a young person is removed from their class and the mainstream teaching, and is taught or asked to work alone for a period of time. In both 2002 and 2008, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the child expressed concern at the high level of permanent and temporary exclusions and in 2008 made the following recommendation:

*'...the disciplinary measure of permanent or temporary exclusion as a means of last resort only, reduce the number of exclusions and get social workers and educational psychologists in school in order to help children in conflict with school.'*

*(United Nations Concluding Observations, 2008. Page 16)*

The Committee was concerned that these particular methods of discipline were employed too freely and that where they did take place children and young people were not involved enough in the discussions around reaching this decision, and were also not afforded the right to appeal in many cases. There was also concern raised about the level of education that children and young people receive after they have been excluded. These concerns were raised in both the Welsh NGO report to the UN in 2007, and the UK Children's Commissioners report of the same year. The Children's Commissioners were particularly concerned that there seemed to be higher instances of exclusion for

certain ethnic minority groups (such as gypsy traveler young people, and those from a black Caribbean background); and also that young people who are classified as having 'special education needs' are also more likely to be permanently excluded. Another concern raised in this report was to do with the ongoing education of those who have been excluded; with the Commissioners reporting of incidences where due to pressures on schools to reduce the numbers of exclusions, in some instances illegal practices were taking place, with schools simply requesting that parents keep their child at home; thus not being officially classed as 'excluded', and therefore not being able to access any alternative education provision. As clearly stated in the UNCRC itself, discipline used in schools should not be at the detriment of any other rights contained within the Convention; therefore if those young people who have been excluded are struggling to access alternative means of education, this is not acceptable.

The process of being excluded also has the potential to impact on other elements of a young person's life, and their access to rights other than education. For example, this isolation from their peers could potentially impact on a young person's social skills and social life; or may lead to discrimination by other young people. Further research in this area to gather the views and experiences of young people who have been excluded (both permanently and temporarily) would prove useful to determine the extent of the impact of exclusion, in all areas of their life (including education).

#### **The use of 'rewards' as a method of discipline: discussion findings**

According to the findings of this research, it would seem that methods and system of rewarding positive behaviour are not used nearly as frequently as systems which punish negative behaviour. The young people taking part in this research felt that it would be more effective to encourage and 'incentivise' positive behaviour – however, it should be noted that since their experience of methods of reward was limited, this perception of it being more effective was largely based on opinion rather than evidence or experience, on the whole. Some young people reported how 'disheartened' they feel at times when they are working really hard and doing really well, and there is little acknowledgement of this from teachers. Given the levels of stress and pressure that young people

mentioned experiencing at certain times in their education, it is clear to see why this encouragement may be important to them. Some young people also mentioned the frustration they feel at times because of the way that rewards are currently administered in many schools. There is a feeling amongst young people that if you are a student who generally behaves badly, and achieves poorly; but then you do one positive thing, this is rewarded. However, if you are a student who consistently behaves well and achieves highly, you are never rewarded and this is very disheartening. This echoes the findings of *'Our Rights, Our Story' (2007)*.

Generally this research would suggest that the education system, and schools themselves have some way to go before they are truly able to claim that the administration of school discipline is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Current systems seem often to involve the removal of access to a particular right or rights as a form of punishment. (For example, detentions remove the individual's leisure and play time, as well as their time to meet with their peers). Whilst it is accepted under the Human Rights Convention that there may be times when people's particular circumstances justify the limitation of a particular right (for example, if someone commits a crime they may lose their right to liberty by being imprisoned). However, it is clear that this should be avoided if there are other options available. This research suggests that young people themselves feel that a process of rewarding positive behavior would be an effective alternative option; therefore further work into the impact of this type of discipline may prove useful in identifying more effective, rights based forms of discipline in future.

### Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the findings of the current research in relation to three main themes: bullying, teaching methods and discipline. For each of the themes and the findings within it, it has been possible to relate the findings to the realisation and access of rights for children and young people in Wales. It has also been possible to discuss the findings of this research in relation the political context of Wales in light of devolution,

and a formal commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child from the Welsh Government. In all three themes the research would seem to suggest that there are definite and distinct gaps between the intentions of Welsh government policy and guidance; and the realisation of rights in young people's lives. This would suggest that more needs to be done by Government to monitor and evaluate the use and effectiveness of these policies and guidance documents; but also that more onus needs to be placed on other 'duty bearers' to provide, and allow access to the rights which young people have under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **General Conclusion on the Crucial Relationship between Education and Rights**

This qualitative research with thirty two young people from across Wales has demonstrated the indivisible, interdependent and unconditional nature of children's rights. As discussed in the chapter entitled '*An exploration of Human Rights, and Children's Rights*' (page 13), the access to a right may be denied (by the behaviour of an individual, or the policy of a Government, for example), but the right itself does not cease to exist. As Jack Donnelly (2003) described when referring to human rights: '*one either is or is not a human being, and therefore has the same human rights as everyone else*' (page 10). Similarly with children's rights (or children's human rights – as they are sometimes referred to), one is either a child or is not, and therefore all children have equal rights, which cannot be taken away. This research has also demonstrated the potential for the removal of access to a particular right or rights, may have a detrimental effect on the ability for the individual to claim other rights, or on the ability of others to claim their rights. For example, in the case of bullying, evidence suggests that if an individual young person experiences a violation of their own rights somehow (e.g. the right to protection from abuse), it is possible that they may consequently go on to violate the rights of another by bullying them.

*'All human rights are indivisible, whether they are civil and political rights, ... economic, social and cultural rights, ... or collective rights, ... are indivisible, interrelated and interdependent. The improvement of one right facilitates advancement of the others. Likewise, the deprivation of one right adversely affects the others.'*

([www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights)

This research has also highlighted the important role that children and young people have to play in enabling each other to access their rights, without impediment. This was particularly evident within the theme of bullying; where the bully's behaviour can often result in a number of rights not being accessed by the victim (as discussed in the findings earlier). Generally there needs to be greater education about rights and the



UNCRC in schools across Wales, and this should include discussions about this dual role that young people have to play, as both '*rights holder*' and '*duty bearer*' (terms used by Joachim Theis (2003), and addressed in the opening chapter); and the fundamental principles of 'claim rights' and 'liberty rights' (Wesley Hohfeld); and that individuals' liberty rights are only valid if they do not impinge upon the 'claim rights' of another individual. This increased knowledge and understanding of children's rights and specifically the UNCRC needs to take place not just for children and young people, but for school staff also. If children and young people are unaware of what they should expect from their education, it becomes more difficult for them to lay claim to their rights within it. Equally, if adults working with children and young people are not fully educated about the UNCRC, they may be unaware of the duties within it, and the vital role they play in enabling the realisation of these rights for children and young people in their care. It is likely that the vast majority of professionals working with young people would be horrified to think that they were in some way having a detrimental effect on young people's rights; however this research would suggest that this is happening. For example, the failure of schools to implement and publicise effective anti bullying policies; the apparent lack of variety in teaching methods; the small but significant number of methods of discipline which appear to seek to shame or embarrass pupils who have misbehaved in some way. All of the findings of this research suggest that more needs to be done to raise awareness AND understanding of the UNCRC, and the interlinking nature of the Articles within it.

Finally, within all three themes which this research has covered, it has demonstrated the great value that can be gained from listening to the views of young people with regards to their education. Within each theme this research has demonstrated the ability that young people have to make reasoned, realistic suggestions and requests; which often would be easy to implement, and yet make a vast improvement to their experiences of education (for example, where to locate the 'bully box' within a school is not an enormous decision to include young people in. However, not including them may result in the existence of a resource that is barely used, and a school population without an effective method for reporting bullying). The active participation of young people in the

design of school policies and lessons is also likely to lead to a much more 'satisfied' pupil population who feel respected and valued.

The principles of Article twelve of the UNCRC are at the heart of this research, and therefore it may be unsurprising that this research has concluded with a recommendation for greater access to Article twelve (within education), which states that

*'State 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 ...'*

*(United Nations, 1989. Article 12(1))*

A greater opportunity to access this right within education would result in a more positive experience for young people (and almost certainly for teachers too). This point of view is echoed by the NGO report to the UN Committee of 2007 (namely *'Stop, Look, Listen: the Road to Realising Children's Rights in Wales'*), and *'The UK Children's Commissioners Report to the UN Committee'*, which both concluded that the participation of children and young people within formal education is far too limited, and should be improved and increased as a matter of priority. The UN Committee itself, in its *'Concluding Observations'* of 2008, reported that *' participation of children in all aspects of schooling is inadequate'*, and they recommended that governments in the UK should:

*'...strengthen children's participation in all matters of school, classroom and learning which affect them.'*

*(United Nations Concluding Observations. 2008. Page 16)*

This research has sought to gather and listen to the experiences and feelings of young people, with regard to their education. This qualitative research has demonstrated the learning and knowledge that can come from allowing young people to access their right to Article Twelve, and have the opinions heard on matters which affect them.

**APPENDIX 1.a****Group 1 High School Research Session****9<sup>th</sup> December 2009****9.30am – 1.30pm**

|   | Gender | Year group |
|---|--------|------------|
| 1 | M      | 7          |
| 2 | F      | 8          |
| 3 | M      | 8          |
| 4 | M      | 9          |
| 5 | M      | 9          |
| 6 | F      | 10         |
| 7 | M      | 10         |
| 8 | F      | 11         |
| 9 | F      | 11         |

**Part 1 – Bullying****Activity 1****What is bullying?**

*The group were each given 'post it' notes and asked to note down what they thought bullying was. They were told there was no right and wrong answer, but this was to get their opinion about what they think bullying is. The young people then put their 'post it' notes up on flipchart at the front of the room.*

- Cyber bullying, texts, emails and messaging
- Cruelty
- Nastiness
- Ignoring people

**APPENDIX 1.a**

- Something that happens all the time
- Hit and kicking (physical)
- Ruining someone's life
- Forcing you to do something you don't want to do
- Physical bullying
- Making fun of someone
- Disrespecting someone
- Consistent violence to others
- Making people sad
- Something that happens every day
- Calling people names
- I think bullying is: calling someone names, hitting someone
- Verbal abuse to others
- Hurting others mentally and physically
- Violent bullying
- Hitting someone
- Shouting at people, hurting them verbally (verbally)
- Making someone feel bad about themselves
- Embarrassing someone
- Purposefully making someone upset
- Hitting someone or kicking them
- Name calling all the time

Activity 2

*The group were divided into 2 smaller groups and asked to answer the following questions (ie. 1 question per group):*

*'What are the effects of bullying?' and 'Why do people bully others?'*

The effects of bullying:

- Agoraphobic
- Bully because they were bullied
- Antisocial
- Suicide
- Bed wetting
- Loss of self esteem
- Bed wetting
- Scared to tell someone
- Generally unhappy
- Comfort eating
- Depression
- Starving themselves (anorexia)
- Violent
- Feeling endangered
- Self harming
- Could make you stronger in future
- It made me take up judo – not to do anything to the bully – but to know that I could if I needed to

Why do people bully others:

- To make themselves feel better
- They've been bullied in the past
- They find it funny
- They want to prove a point

## APPENDIX 1.a

- To make themselves look better
- Trying to look cool
- Their culture. Their environment
- To let their anger out
- For enjoyment
- If they have a violent personality
- For revenge
- For money
- Jealousy
- How your parents treat you. People might not even realise how bad it is – if they're used to it at home
- To fit in with friends – a group
- Difficult to know whether you should stand up for yourself
- Some sports create an attitude of discipline/respect eg. Rugby (implying some people don't have this)

### Activity 3

*Group discussion followed – see separate transcript*

### Activity 4

*The group were told the recommendations which the OROS report had made and asked whether they thought anything was missing. They said the following:*

- Internet based bully box
- Stuff (on bullying) in youth clubs
- More about what are the effects – speak to adults who've been bullied
- Awareness raising stuff in PSE weeks – like plays or getting different people in

**APPENDIX 1.a****Part 2 – Teaching methods**Activity 1

*The group were divided into 2 smaller groups and ask to write down all of the methods of teaching they have experienced in schools (i.e. what happens in their lessons).*

- Practical stuff
- Talked to
- Physical activity
- Tests
- Worksheets
- Reading a book
- Homework
- Powerpoint
- Drama
- Art
- Music
- School trips
- Research
- Music
- Projects
- Teacher talking in front of class
- Art and creativity
- Practical
- Videos and books
- Lectures
- Powerpoints
- Guest speakers
- Presentations

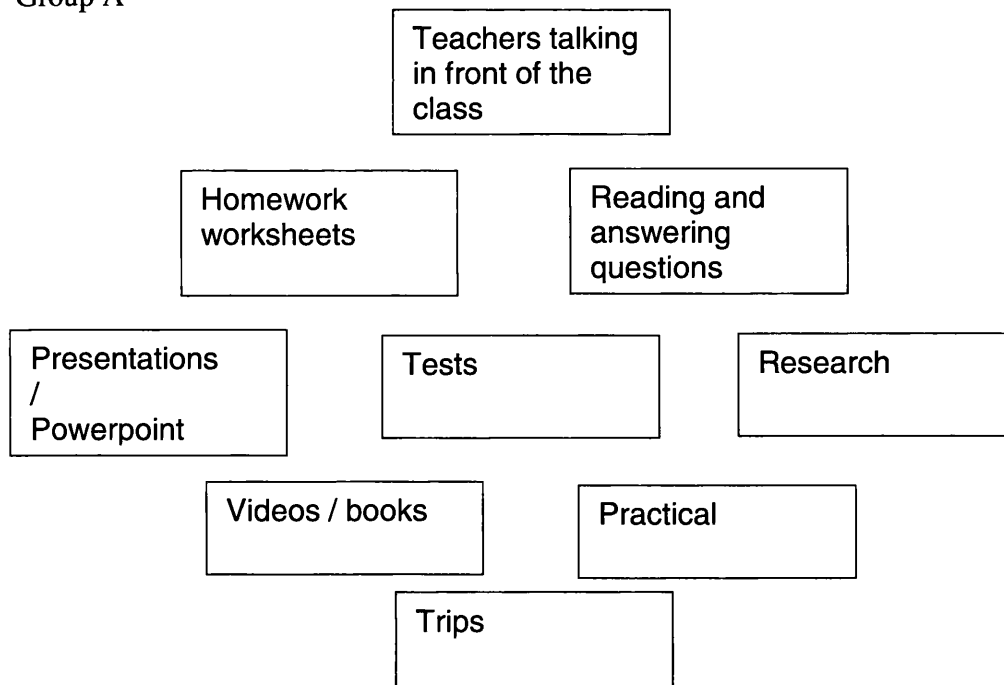
**APPENDIX 1.a**

- Tasks
- Worksheets
- Different types of tests
- Group activities
- Homework
- Reading and answering questions

Activity 2

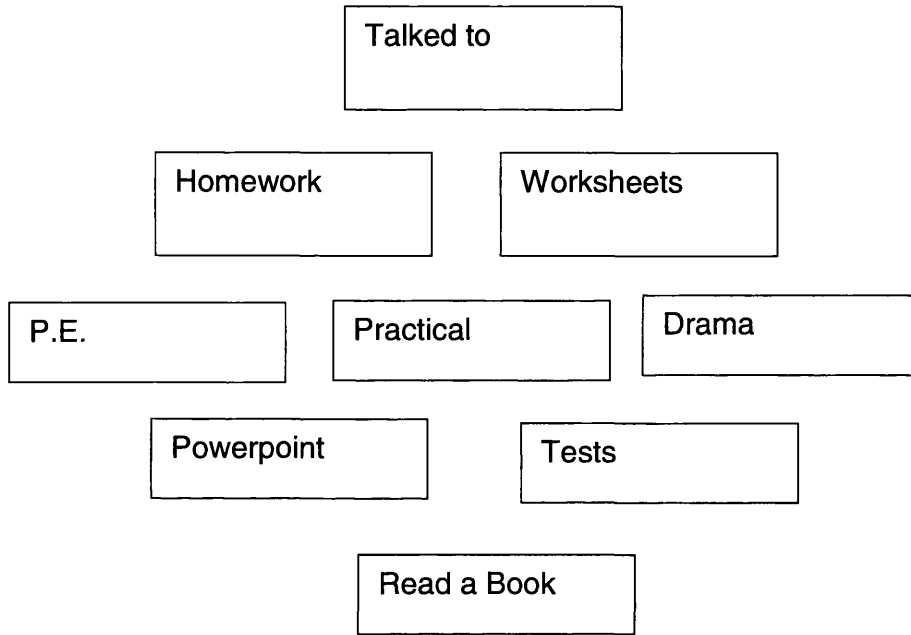
*The groups were then asked to say which methods of teaching they experience most often, and which they experience the least (using a 'diamond rank' template – top of the diamond is most experienced):*

## Group A





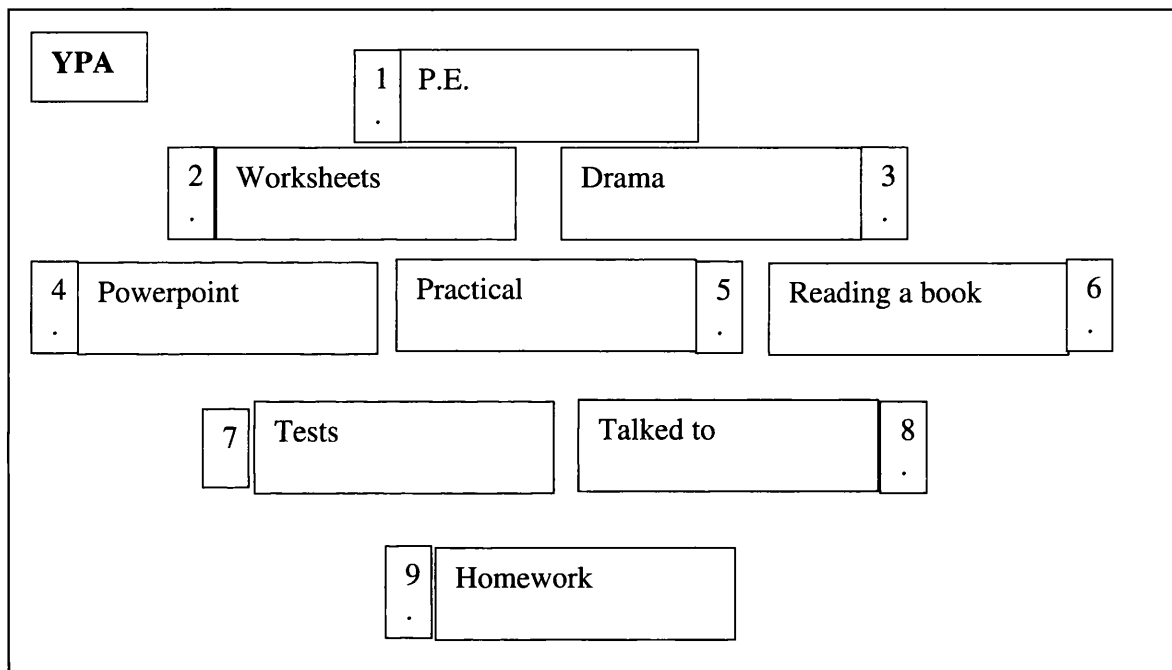
Group B



## APPENDIX 1.a

### Activity 3

The group were then asked to complete a 'diamond rank' sheet individually, and this time to put them in order of how they would prefer to be taught. They were asked to think about how much they enjoy something, but also how well they think that it helps them to learn.



- YPB**
1. Trips.
  2. Practicals
  3. Powerpoint
  4. Worksheets
  5. Videos and books
  6. Research
  7. Homework
  8. Tests
  9. Teacher talking in front of class

## APPENDIX 1.a

- YPC**
1. P.E.
  2. Practical
  3. Drama
  4. Powerpoint
  5. Worksheets
  6. Trips
  7. Tests
  8. Talked to
  9. Homework
- YPD**
1. Trips
  2. Plays
  3. Music
  4. Projects
  5. Group Activities
  6. Practical
  7. Videos/books
  8. Tests
  9. Homework
- YPE**
1. Trips
  2. Practicals
  3. Videos
  4. Presentation
  5. Answering questions
  6. Research
  7. Homework
  8. Teacher talking in front of class
  9. Tests

## **APPENDIX 1.a**

- YPF**
1. Trips
  2. ICT
  3. PE
  4. Research
  5. Practical
  6. DVDs
  7. Tests
  8. Worksheets
  9. Homework

- YPG**
1. Trips
  2. Powerpoint
  3. Reading a book
  4. PE and physical activities
  5. Practicals
  6. Drama
  7. Homework
  8. Talked to
  9. Tests

- YPH**
1. Physical activity
  2. Practical stuff
  3. School trips
  4. Art
  5. Music
  6. Group activities
  7. Talked to
  8. Tests
  9. Homework

## **APPENDIX 1.a**

- YPI**
1. PE
  2. Trips
  3. Practicals
  4. Projects
  5. Drama
  6. Music
  7. Worksheets
  8. Homework
  9. Tests

### Activity 4

*The group were shown the recommendations from the OROS report and asked whether they thought there was anything missing or anything they'd like to ask:*

- More games
- YP to meet heads of departments and tell them ideas
- Speak to form classes about what they would prefer and feedback to other teachers
- Even if only 1 lesson every 2 weeks – use something new and different
- Training for teachers e.g. ADHD
- Lessons are too long
- It is better if lessons involve DOING something

### **Part 3 - Discipline**

#### Activity 1

*The group were each given a 'post-it' note and asked to write down all of the methods of 'discipline' that they'd experienced in school.*

## APPENDIX 1.a

1...

Sent out

Told off

Stuff taken away

Isolation, excluded, expelled

Being shouted at

Isolation

Detention

Concerns

Shouted at

Grounded

Grounded

Exclusion

Shouted at

The way you behave has consequences

Stuff taken away

After school detention

Shout

Put in front of head and head of year and assistant head, excluded and isolation

Detention

Cane

8 punishments the + 1 week per thing (??)

Detention

Concerns or detention

Inclusion (??)

Shout

Detention

Sent out of class

Detentions

Arrested

Grounded

## APPENDIX 1.a

Ruler wacking your knuckles

I don't know...the cane

Concerns

No clubs

Isolation

*NB – I checked whether the references to physical punishment were things that they had experienced or just heard about. The young people confirmed that these were just forms of discipline they'd heard about.*

### Activity 2

*The group had a brief discussion about the concepts of 'punishment' and 'reward', and how both can be used to ensure discipline within a school environment. In 2 small groups the young people were asked to explore the 'pro's and con's' of using punishment as a form of discipline, and then do the same for 'reward'.*

#### Group A

Punishment – pro's - some people learn from it

Con's - Wastes time

- Doesn't always work

- People don't turn up and then they get away with it

Reward - pro's - people work hard for them

- gives you a lift

- good fun

con's - the same people always get them

- naughty kids get more attention by doing 1 good thing, whereas if you are always good, you don't get as many

## APPENDIX 1.a

### Group B

Punishment - Pro's - class detention – you feel they are unfair  
Con's - Detentions, concerns, lunch times – not fair  
– nothing learnt

Rewards - Pro's - They make you want to be good  
- they make you work hard  
Con's - Stamps  
- not equal  
- not everyone gets them  
- if you're not good then you get rewards, if you're  
good you don't  
- trips

### **Part 4 – evaluation**

*The group were asked to say what they had enjoyed about the session, and what they would change (using smiley faces).*

#### Good

It was nice to discuss things and know that it is heard

Discussing problems throughout the schools

Doing group work

The smell of post-it notes!!

Talking about it



## APPENDIX 1.a

It was very creative!!

□

Fun □

We learned something new

Discussing and sharing ideas

The fruit was really good, it helped me concentrate

Just talking

Fun

It was fun and we learnt stuff!!

Missing lessons and it was interesting

It was a fun way to learn

Chatting eating laaaaaa!

It was really interesting

Bad

More fun activities

More games

A bit too much writing

Fruit to eat – we need chocolate --- I agree!!

More food

More group work

**APPENDIX 1.b****Group 2 High School Research Session****16<sup>th</sup> March 2010****9.30am – 11.30am***13 young people in total*

|           | <i>gender</i> | <i>Yr group</i> |
|-----------|---------------|-----------------|
| <i>1</i>  | <i>F</i>      | <i>7</i>        |
| <i>2</i>  | <i>M</i>      | <i>7</i>        |
| <i>3</i>  | <i>M</i>      | <i>7</i>        |
| <i>4</i>  | <i>M</i>      | <i>7</i>        |
| <i>5</i>  | <i>M</i>      | <i>8</i>        |
| <i>6</i>  | <i>M</i>      | <i>8</i>        |
| <i>7</i>  | <i>M</i>      | <i>8</i>        |
| <i>8</i>  | <i>F</i>      | <i>9</i>        |
| <i>9</i>  | <i>F</i>      | <i>9</i>        |
| <i>10</i> | <i>F</i>      | <i>9</i>        |
| <i>11</i> | <i>F</i>      | <i>9</i>        |
| <i>12</i> | <i>F</i>      | <i>10</i>       |
| <i>13</i> | <i>F</i>      | <i>10</i>       |

**Part 1 – Bullying****Activity 1****What is bullying?**

*The group were each given 'post it' notes and asked to note down what they thought bullying was. They were told there was no right and wrong answer, but this was to get*

## APPENDIX 1.b

100

*their opinion about what they think bullying is. The young people then put their 'post it' notes up on flipchart at the front of the room.*

- Not nice
- Hitting people
- Fun!
- Bad
- Cyber bullying
- Bullying is constantly pushing someone
- Cruel
- Gay
- Mean
- Laughing and picking on someone for some petty reason
- Nasty
- Something that happens for a long time
- Hateful!
- Hatred
- Deadly
- Something for teachers to chat about
- Violent
- A big issue
- Verbal
- Cyber bullying
- Cruel
- Offensive
- Stupid
- Bullying is ganging up on one individual
- ...is mean

## APPENDIX 1.b

### Activity 2

*The group were divided into 2 smaller groups and asked to answer the following questions (ie. 1 question per group):*

*'What are the effects of bullying?' and 'Why do people bully others?'*

### The effects of bullying:

- Black eyes
- Suicide – I wouldn't take it that seriously, but others would
- Scratches
- Bruises
- Ripped clothing
- Insecurity
- Self esteem
- Paranoid
- Memory loss
- Injuries
- Self conscious
- Upsetting
- Shy
- Scared
- Dodgy – makes you feel dodgy, don't feel very comfortable, makes people act dodgily!
- Scizophrenic – it may lead people to have mental health issues

**APPENDIX 1.b**Why do people bully others:

- Maybe someone has something they don't have and they would want
- Nasty
- Bored
- Ugly
- Makes them hard
- Jealous
- Because they can
- Illness
- Something has upset them
- Schizophrenia
- Weird hairstyles
- Gingers
- Jealousy
- Bisexual
- Weight
- Height
- Disability
- Homophobia
- Race
- Sexism
- Hair colour
- Just for being different
- Something that they (the bully) have been through
- Showing off to mates
- They've been bullied

## **APPENDIX 1.b**

### Activity 3

*Group discussion followed – see separate transcript*

### Activity 4

*The group were told the recommendations which the OROS report had made and asked whether they thought anything was missing. They said the following:*

- Even if policies were extended to cover after school activities, teachers wouldn't do anything – nothing would happen.

## **Part 2 – Teaching methods**

### Activity 1

*The group were divided into 3 smaller groups and ask to write down all of the methods of teaching they have experienced in schools (i.e. what happens in their lessons).*

- Talks!
- Year 9 minibooks – laptops
- Group work
- Worksheets
- Tests
- Assessments
- Quizzes
- Welsh placemats
- Presentations
- Active boards
- Posters
- Cards for different occasions
- Poster
- Starters

- Coursework
- Group discussions
- Group work
- Keywords
- Notes in the planners
- Handouts
- Merit and greenslips
- Power points
- Groups work
- Year 9 laptops
- Books
- White boards
- Interactive white boards
- Handouts
- puzzles

*Due to the fact that the session had been cut from 4 hours to 2 hours by the school, and the fact that they were quite a disruptive group, it was becoming obvious that it was not going to be possible to complete all of the exercises as initially intended. Therefore I decided to end the session by giving them an individual activity (rather than more group work), and asking them a fairly open ended question; thus giving the opportunity for them to comment on teaching methods, discipline, and any other issue which came to mind.*

### **Activity 2**

*The group were given a piece of paper each and asked to write the sentence:*

*'If I were headteacher I would...'*

## APPENDIX 1.b

*They were then given 15 minutes to write down whatever thoughts they had about this.*

If I was headteacher I would:

- Close the school down; expel all the children; quit; fire all teachers; let all the children run away
- Ban all bad teachers; make sure bullies are dealt with properly; specific people only about e.g. if you have bad history no entry
- Make sure everyone new (knew) what to do with bullying; make sure teachers actually know how to teach
- Fire Mrs Hold and Mrs Cleavy
- Stop bullying; have a cool room and fifa; have hidden cameras; do up the school (£100,000); have assembly at the end of the day
- Sack Mrs Hold becoz she cannot teach to save her life; I would set up an antibullying scheme to help people get through their bullying
- Stop bullying; better teachers; have assembly in the afternoon
- Quit; pay raise; stop bullying; hidden cameras so we can see what's going on; do up the school
- Sneak up on each class and see when the teachers scream in the kids face; have assembly in the afternoon, because everyone doesn't walk in when they are a bit late because in case everyone looks at them, then they get marked absent
- Kick out all the bad teachers and bring back the cane, and I would let you go out of school at dinner
- Have all students know where to go if they were getting bullied; or if they had something they needed to talk about; and make sure teachers know they responsibilities of looking after a child's worries!



## APPENDIX 1.c

### Research Session with Group 3 Grand Council members

25<sup>th</sup> September 2010

2pm – 4pm

|    | Gender | Yr Group |
|----|--------|----------|
| 1  | F      | 10       |
| 2  | F      | 11       |
| 3  | F      | 11       |
| 4  | F      | 12       |
| 5  | F      | 11       |
| 6  | F      | 10       |
| 7  | M      | 11       |
| 8  | M      | 12       |
| 9  | M      | 13       |
| 10 | M      | 9        |

As some Grand Council members had already been consulted at the beginning of the research, the intention with this session (which took place after the 2 school sessions), was to gather additional opinions and ideas (data) from this group, where it was felt there were ‘gaps’ in the knowledge provided by the previous 2 sessions.

- Some time was spent updating and informing the group about the work that I had completed so far, and why.

### Teaching Methods

The group were asked to ‘brainstorm’ all the methods that teachers use (in their experience), and to rank them in order of what they experience most often (in small groups).

## 1 APPENDIX 1.c

*1 = most experienced*

### **Group A**

- 1 - Lecturing
- 2 - Text book
- 3 - Presentations
- 4 - Extra curriculum
- 5 - Independent
- 6 - Homework
- 7 - Assemblies
- 8 - Exam practise
- 9 - Problem solving / games
- 10 - Involving

### **Group B**

*Group B numbered their items but also decided to make 3 categories of 'always', 'sometimes' and 'never'.*

#### Always

- 1 - Lecture
- 2 - Textbook
- 3 - Presentation
- 4 - Homework
- 5 - Assemblies
- 6 - Group work
- 7 - Google
- 8 - Independent work (in 6<sup>th</sup> form)

#### Sometimes

- 1 - Video
- 2 - Games

## APPENDIX 1.c

- 3 - Practical
- 4 - Exam Practise
- 5 - Work experience
- 6 - Guest speaker
- 7 - Tutorial
- 8 - Trips

Never

- 1 - PSE
- 2 - Braille
- 3 - Smell
- 4 - Team building

Individually the group were asked to rank which methods they would prefer and would help them learn more.

YPA

- 1 - Lecturing
- 2 - textbook
- 3 - Exam papers
- 4 - Team Building
- 5 - Presenting
- 6 - Problem solving
- 7 - Trips
- 8 - Problem facing
- 9 - Homework
- 10 - Games

## APPENDIX 1.c

### YPB

- 1 - Drawing/Art
- 2 - Extra curricular
- 3 - Homework
- 4 - Lecturing
- 5 - Writing

### YPC

- 1 - Debate and discussion
- 2 - Copying off the board
- 3 - Presentations
- 4 - Assemblies
- 5 - School trip

### YPD

- 1 - Independent work
- 2 - Video
- 3 - Practical
- 4 - Presentation
- 5 - Trips

*YPE (didn't use numbers and seems to have answered the question slightly differently)*

- Science club (heart)
- No forced group work
- I like being allowed to write notes (no 'pens down' etc.)
- I like giving presentations
- I like being responsible for my own work

## APPENDIX 1.c

### YPF

- 1 - Trips
- 2 - Physical Learning
- 3 - Work experience
- 4 - Extra curriculum
- 5 - Group work

### YPG

- 1 - Team building
- 2 - Trips
- 3 - Fun
- 4 - Practical
- 5 - Problem solving

### YPH

- 1 - Lecturing
- 2 - Practical
- 3 - Debating
- 4 - Presentations
- 5 - Homework

### YPI

*Young person 'I' did not number their responses and it is therefore unclear what order they should appear in. However, the list contains:*

- Not to be in class with your m8s (mates)
- Homework
- Helping teachers
- Listening in class
- Exam practise
- Reading

## APPENDIX 1.c

- Extra classes
- After school clubs

### Discipline

The group was divided into 2 smaller groups, and they were asked to note down what forms of ‘punishment’ and ‘reward’ they have experienced ie. What would happen if they’d done something ‘good’? What would happen if they’d done something ‘bad’?

### **Punishment**

- Detention
- Suspended
- Expelled
- ‘Icelacion’ (isolation) room
- Writing lines
- Phone taken off you
- Picking up rubbish
- Red/yellow cards
- Sent home
- Not allowed to play sport
- ‘Level system’ (ie. If you get to level 6, you’re out!)
- Sent out
- Moved from friends
- Slave in canteen
- Stand on the bar – *A young person later explained that there was a balcony over the dining hall in her school, and people who had misbehaved were made to line up along the edge of the balcony ie. ‘the bar’ at lunch time, so that everyone could see who’d been in trouble.*

**APPENDIX 1.c**

- Merit / Green card
- Postcard home
- Awards evening
- Get respect from teachers
- 'Star of the week'
- Stickers
- Dinner pass
- Good grades
- Tokens
- Letter written in your 'homework diary'
- Leave school early

*A discussion then followed about 'discipline' in schools – particularly the issue of effectiveness of punishment and reward.*

- "There are no rewards in school"
- "Giving out punishments is easier"
- 
- "It's cheaper to punish than reward"
- "If you're bad in my school, you get put on a 'trial'. If you show signs of improvement you get a reward. If you're always good, and never get yourself put on a 'trial' then you get no reward."
- "Rewards are crap. A sticker?!?"
- "It's disheartening that you can stress and try really hard all the way through school, but you don't get as much support and encouragement as those people who might be struggling or not even trying."
- "If you even get told you're doing well you get such a buzz"
- "More attention is given to negative behaviour."

## APPENDIX 1.c

### If I were headteacher...

In order to give the participants to say anything else they wanted to about their education, they were asked to get in pairs and complete the sentence: 'If I were headteacher I would ...'

#### **Pair A**

- More help with young people with dyslexia and special needs and behavioural problems
- Enforce a strict dress code.
- Rusan (Russian) roulette in detention
- Send them to Iraq
- Make sure they stick to the rules
- Boarding school
- Acknowledge what they do after school!

#### **Pair B**

- Reward the good people and punish the bad people and also encourage everyone that is doing well.
- Better teachers and methods
- Young people pick teachers

#### **Pair C**

- Create a better punishment system (after school detention starting punishment, extra work etc.)
- Input a rewards scheme
- Less time for naughty children as they take up too much learning time ('Flan' would cane them!)
- Leave at any time without expecting to come back
- Include everyone in the school system changes that the school itself makes.
- If 'Flan' was headteacher we'd be screwed!



## APPENDIX 1.c

### Pair D

- Set standards and stick to them
- Encouragement is the key
- Competent teachers
- Young people involved with interviews
- Tank tops/blazers
- NO swearing
- If you miss school (bunk) you have to pay a fine
- Secret police (spies, mafia)

## APPENDIX 2.a

### Transcript of Group 1 High School Research Session

9<sup>th</sup> December 2009

9.30am – 1.30pm

1. me: ok, so. the one about young people being bullied after school... you don't think that's true?
2. yp: no because a lot of young people are bullied and they still go to after school activities because they find it's a way of getting away from the person who's bullying them. i mean...
3. yp: but don't you find that if school is the place where it all happens then you'd want to get away from there, and not be there for as long as you can?
4. me: ok so there's...(?) ..., for both sides of the arguement really then isn't there. cos people who don't wanna be in school may wanna go to the afterschool activities?
5. yp: maybe ... it might depend what it is
6. yp: yeah, so like a martial art or something ...
7. yp: to defend yourself.
8. me: so you think it depends what the activity is?
9. yp: yeah
10. yp: also it depends who's there, cos if the person who's bullying you is at the activity then you won't go there. but if people who don't bully you and are nice

## APPENDIX 2.a

11. to you, then you will go there.

12. me: so it depends who's going to be there, what activity it is,

13. yp3: what day i suppose because you might struggle to get transport home afterwards

14. me: ok, so waht about things like if you're going to be able to get home safely, so if you're going to have to walk him, does that mean that you don't want to go in case you meet anybody on the way home, and that kind of stuff?

15. NO VERBAL RESPONSE

16. me: Ok,what about the one about transport...so young people who said they had been bullied were more likely to feel unsafe on school transport, what do you think about that one?

17. yp4: that's not true i don't think, cos you can just sit away from the person who bullies ya. cos say like its ... they sit right next to ya...

18. yp3: yeah, but there are people.. i mean it's surprising, there are not that many people... but there are lots of people running around,and it's really noisy on the bus...

19. yp: and the driver can't do anything can they cos they're...

20. yp3: cos they're drivers.

21. A FEW YP SPEAK AT ONCE – CAN'T MAKE IT OUT

22. yp4: our driver stops the bus, he gets up and walks down, says sit down, put your

## APPENDIX 2.a

23. seatbelt on...

24. yp1: *very quietly*...there's (?) on my bus... and he always chucks things at me.

25. me: so you would be one of those people that says being on the bus is horrible?

26. yp1: yeah

27. me: because that's where... because there's almost no way of getting away from it is there?

28. yp1: yeah

29. me: ok. so we've got both sides again...so we've got somebody saying 'you're on the bus just sit away from them', but then the other hand experience of saying 'well then you just get things thrown at you', and also then the bully's got an audience. so some of the stuff that we've already been talking about - if bullying is to 'look cool' or to 'show off', or whatever - then on a bus, they've got kind of an audience sat there ...

30. yp3: noone would disagree with them there

31. A FEW VOICES AT ONCE

32. yp1: *very quietly*...and they always throw spit bombs at me

33. me: spit bombs?

34. yp1: um.hm

35. me: i don't even know what a spit bomb is...

## APPENDIX 2.a

36. yp: you put it in the end of ...

37. yp2: you put in erm...

38. yp1: d'ya know the bit of a biro, well, they chew bits of paper, put it in the end of the pen and then they blow it out.

39. yp3: it's like a pea shooter but it's got pieces of paper....

40. me: mmmmmmm...lovely!!

41. yp2: i used to do it in my class.

42. me: you used to fire spit bombs in your class?

43. yp2: not every class...

44. yp3: you can also do it with straws

45. INAUDIBLE CHATTER

46. me: what about, before (?) he was saying after school, so not necessarily after school activities but..

47. yp4: it's break to do something you love instead of doing loads of work that you really don't like.

48. me: ok, so it could be like you're one highlight of the day if you get to go and play football or whatever...

## APPENDIX 2.a

49. yp4: yeah

50. me: ok, so what about earlier when you were saying... you said to Mr Evans that for a lot of young people, after school is when the bullying might happen, outside of school

51. yp: yeah

52. me: so do you mean like on the way home or?

53. yp4: na, not like, like when you've like gone home, got changed and everyone goes out to have a laugh and everything, to play and everything

54. me: ok

55. yp4: and then if you run into someone who's bullying you, and there's a group of them and ....

56. yp3: you feel unsafe

57. me:ok

58. yp4: ...you try and avoid them and it can be really inconvenient and everything and if you're scared of them and you have to like change your way and everything

59. me: ok what do other people think about that, do you think it's worse outside of school, cos i suppose in school, at least you've got teachers...

60. yp: there's staff and structures...lessons

## APPENDIX 2.a

61. yp: or you might not always see them outside school. like if you're the type of person who doesn't go out cos you've been bullied.
62. me: yeah ok. or you might not live near them so you might not ever... ok what about the fact then that 40% of young people said that they didn't know about the policies in their school?
63. yp4: i wasn't a hundred percent sure that we had one either.
64. yp: we have got one...
65. yp: they just aren't like on pictures...
66. yp4: they just have this sort of thing... 'don't bully', 'if you're being bullying don't bully someone else' and everything
67. yp1: yeah
68. yp: i don't think people take notice of them
69. me: do you think that if you were being bullied, that you'd know...not that you'd know what to do, cos as we've said it's not necessarily easy to know the right thing to do, but would you know what dinas bran school says you should do?
70. yp: no
71. yp: er no
72. yp3: not really. i wouldn't say it's that obvious. i mean everyone says there's notices in schools, it's on the notice board, but where are the notice boards??

## APPENDIX 2.a

73. yp: i think young people in this school don't really know that we have a policy and a council and ...

74. me: so even in this school, which seems quite active about bullying... so you doing all these questionnaires and stuff...

75. yp3: we do we do ...

76. yp4: i don't see how it helps...

77. yp: i don't think questionnaires and that help people stop bullying or anything...

78. yp2: cos it ...cos

79. yp: we do have a bullying box...

80. yp: oh yeah

81. yp2: but if they don't put who they are ... that they've been bullied... they won't do....

82. INAUDIBLE CHATTER INCLUDING:

83. where are these bully boxes?

84. me: ok, guys, can we all try and talk one at a time. so bethan you were saying, you've been bullied on your mobile phone, so there needs to be something about bullying outside the school as wel cos it can carry on... so were you bullied by somebody from school?

85. yp1: yeah



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86. me: ok so still, although it's not happening in school, it's someone who you know through school, pupils of this school, so do you think it's something that school should take on to do outside of school...do you think if you misbehave and bully someone from this school, after school hours, it's still a school issue is it?

87. yp5: but teachers wouldn't see it as school cos really you're not in their like...

88. yp3: you're not in the grounds and...

89. yp5: yeah like in their sort of care. Like in school, when you're in school...

90. yp: it depends on the teacher i think doesn't it

91. yp5: yeah

92. me: i think it's difficult, but then bethan, do you feel like that bullying that takes place out of school hours would have an effect on how you are in school?

93. yp1: yeah

94. me: you do?

95. yp1: yeah

96. me: cos it's ... that person's in this school. So whether it happened at 9 o'clock last night, when you see them at 10 o'clock this morning, it's still going to effect you isn't it?

97. yp1: yeah

## 1APPENDIX 2.a

98. yp4: what i don't understand about people getting bullied on msn and everything, why don't they just delete friend?

99. yp2: block them. block them

100. yp3: they can still unblock it and keep trying to add you again.

101. yp: there's this person who keeps on trying to talk to me on msn, but its kind of like a sick person. i keep on blocking them, but they keep on popping up, every time i go on msn.

102. yp: i've had that before

103. me: i don't really understand msn

104. HA HA HA

105. yp: but it's odd that they've managed to get your msn address

106. yp4: yeah cos yo have to accept them

107. yp: no it's something to do with your age, sex and location

108. me: ok. but i suppose what people could do...correct me if i'm wrong - but your msn address is the same as your hotmail address? so even if they don't pop up and have an msn chat with you, they've got a way of contacting you cos they can still email you can't they?

109. yp: yeah

## APPENDIX 2.a

110. me: so they could still, even if you never reply, you could still get an email from them bullying you, which you would see. and you could delete it, but by then you've already seen it.

111. CHATTER

112. Teacher: can i just interrupt for 2 ticks...these questionnaires. For your form groups that we decided ... what i'll do is i'll take them down to the place now for photocopying, but i'll just put them into the photocopying queue as it were, and i can give them out friday? and then you can have them with your form tutors to do them monday morning, if that's ok, so i'll go and sort that out. while I'm up, can i get you a tea or a coffee now?

113. me: ooh, tea would be lovely please

114. teacher: milk? sugar?

115. me: milk and one sugar please.

116. teacher: no problem. i can't offer all of you teas and coffees i'm sorry. and break is 11 o'clock.

117. TEACHER LEAVES ROOM

118. yp3: say like maybe you've been friends with someone for a while, then suddenly they start bullying you - then after a while it's all sorted and you become friends again. i mean, who i was bullied by was (?) our families were really close and we were all really good friends, we'd even been on holiday together. and then they started bullying...i started to get bullied, but now we're friends again.

## APPENDIX 2.a

119. me: was that really hard because your family are friends as well?
120. yp: yeah
121. me: so it's harder than if it's somebody just in school?
122. yp: yeas. but ummm, also it's things like, sometimes you feel even more insecure if it's someone that knows you cos they've got personal details about you...more details than here
123. yp4: yeah cos you trust them with everything and you tell them all your stuff and then they...go against you...(INAUDIBLE)
124. yp3: yeah. cos it's happening to my mum at the moment. we've got it sorted, but i mean, it's ummm she's just ended up saying don't contact me, and if you do then i've got all the records and everything and we can get her arrested.
125. me: it must be horrible if it's someone you know, and like you say shaun you thought you could trust them, whereas is it's a stranger that says 'you smell', then you can go 'no i don't', so shut up. LAUGHTER. It's still not very nice but if it's somebody that knows you and knows stuff about you, and knows your family and friends, then that must be harder. and maybe they've got real things they can pick on then, maybe they remember a time when you...i don't know...you came out of the toilet with your skirt stuck in your tights or something, i don't know LAUGHTER - they've got real things that actually are true LAUGHTER.
126. ok, what about...cos we've not got long before break. what about this statistic then which says that almost half we could say, of young people said that they have been bullied. do you think that's surprising?

## APPENDIX 2.a

127. yp4: yeah, not really
128. other young people: no, nah
129. yp4: well almost everyone here has been bullied
130. yp: maybe some people exaggerate though, i'm not sure
131. yp3: i don't think it's that accurate as a statistic because it's in the past isn't it, it's not what's happening in our school. I mean the examples we've been giving some have been from primary school, or other times...
132. me: yeah
133. yp3: so it's not always...
134. me: yeah, what will be interesting in your questionnaire is if people answer it honestly, will give you a much more like useful statistic that you can do something with. whereas this is across wales, it doesn't say what school they're in, what year they're in or when it happened, but it's still...because the government statistics say that it's about 15%, so what was interesting for us in doing this was that this says it's actually a lot more than that. so, personally i was quite surprised by how high it was...but as you say you don't know what some people class as bullying and what some people don't
135. yp3: exactly yeah. but don't you think that some people say it for a joke and write down 'yes, i've been bullied'?
136. me: maybe possibly.

## 1APPENDIX 2.a

137. yp3: or maybe like 'i've been called a name' so that's bullying.
138. yp2: someone's possibly telling you a lie and you've just written it down.
139. me: well, all this was - literally this question popped up on the screen 'have you ever been a victim of bullying?', and they could just click 'yes, no or abstain' - but then that's why the kind of stuff we're doing now is so important, so this is a good starting point, and i can have a chat with you about what it means - but it's more important to find out about your experience.
140. yp4: i think...(?)... we all call each other names and everything. it's just a joke, but some people - even if someone was joking, like take it really offensive., and then they think they're being bullied.
141. me: so when does a joke stop being a joke then?
142. yp2: once you've asked someone to stop it.
143. me: ok
144. a few yp: yeah, yeah
145. yp4: when it's consistent. i mean we had a joke this morning because i always walk down with my friends to school, and we always make jokes. sometimes they're slightly...i dunno, sometimes there slightly offensive. one of the boys said we were watching um tv and it was a scottish person and he said 'i despair scottish people', and we go 'we despair gingers', and it's like because he's got ginger hair and he was like (?)we're pulling his leg, we're only joking and he's fine with it.

## APPENDIX 2.a

146. me: so you think that as long as the person you're making the joke about it fine with it?
147. yp4: yeah. i mean if they ask you to stop, stop. fair enough
148. me:...you should stop...ok. how do you know if somebody...so you might say, as you say josh, you might say 'stop it now, that's enough', what if you don't feel confident enough to say ... what if you feel like ... maybe your little ginger friend laughed because he felt ...I'm not saying this is the case, I'm just using him as an example...
149. yp4: yeah
150. me: what if he laughed because he felt like he had to laugh because everybody else was laughing and he'd ruin the moment if he said 'that's not funny, please stop it'. do you think there's any.....
151. yp3: you should be able to tell your friend to stop it
152. INAUDIBLE CHAT
153. yp: i guess that other people might think that they're too serious or...
154. yp3: yeah
155. yp: and that you can't take a joke
156. yp: yeah
157. yp4: but if they did get...sometimes it's like you're just joking, or if they

do start to get...or they're not as chatty as usual or ... then you just say you're sorry, we're just joking, we were just messing around

158. yp: but it doesn't really matter if you say you're sorry cos you've already said it...

159. yp4: if it really does offend then...

160. me: maybe it's something you could bring up with one or two later. so you let them laugh in the moment and then later on say 'oi leave it'.

161. LAUGHTER

162. yp2: me and Patrick when we were in year 7, we were having a fight - it wasn't serious, but we were having a little mess around on the bus, and Patrick ... i said to Pat (???) your eye, and he said something back but i'm not going to say it...but it was funny

163. me: but it wasn't bullying?

164. yp2: yeah, yeah i laughed my head off

165. me: so there is ... i think most humour, if you ever watch and comedians, it's always at somebody's expense. it's always...humour is cruel. it's the only way it's funny. if it's not a bit nasty, it's not that funny, but as long as the person you're laughing at is in on the joke, i suppose is what i'm saying

166. a few yp: yeah yeah

167. yp: but i think you have got to be prepared to take it a little bit



## 1<sup>00</sup> APPENDIX 2.a

168. me: to take a joke?
169. yp: yeah, cos some stuff that you're gonna do is gonna be stupid, and you'd rather laugh at it. but if you go 'ah' and stop laughing, they're just gonna...it just gives them more to take the mick out of
170. yp2: yeah
171. yp: yeah, cos i ...
172. yp: yeah that's true
173. me: yeah, i've got 1 friend who's not very good at laughing at herself, right... so the rest of us, like you all say ... you've got your mates, you take the mick out of each other, you know what each other's funny bits are, and you can ... you do laugh at each other. but i've got one friend who really doesn't like it when we laugh at her ... but then a lot of other times she says 'oh, i feel like i don't get on with you as much as everybody else', and you're like that's why ... you can't be serious all the time, and also you can't join in the laughs about everybody else, and not let anyone laugh at you. so there is a ... a balance i think, but it's how to strike that really. ok, so the last thing before we go for break, and I'm aware it's really warm in here, so a break might be good for everyone ...
174. NOISE
175. ...is the young people that wrote the report ... there was like 16 young people ... and i've already shown you their pictures, ... 16 young people ... i think 19 altogether actually...yep, 19 in total. ... ta daaaa! from all around Wales that wrote this report ok, so they designed the questions, they designed the methods, they chose where we went to ask the questions, they looked at the results and

they wrote it all up, so they worked really really hard

176. yp2: he looks like me

177. me: oh yeah, he does look a bit like you actually.

178. LAUGHTER

179. me: so, those young people - what they did was ... once they looked at all of the information that had been gathered ... and this isn't all of it - this is just a little bit, they came up with recommendations, that they thought ... a bit like we've been saying today, like 'well i reckon it should be like this, and i think they should do that' - so the stuff that they came up with was ... and I'm trying to read it upside down...that anti bullying policies in schools need to be promoted more so that everyone knows about them...so that's pupils, teachers, dinnerladies, bus drivers...and everybody knows that if a pupil from dinas bran is being bullied, this is what we do about it.

180. ONTO FLIP CHART NOTES HERE

181. yp 2: we've got the bully box in the library

182. yp3: the problem with the bully box we've got now is that a lot of people won't go there, cos everyone can see that you're putting something in

183. yp: that's why we've been talking about setting up an email

184. yp3: there should be a way of doing it on the internet so noone knows it's you

185. me: so you're saying you should be able to access this internet bully box

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186. from home aswell?
187. yp3: yeah, you should be able to use your username and password from school, but then they'l probably send letters home to your parents
188. yp2: letters home, ... i don't think...inaudible
189. yp4: the thing is, you know how people now can put something in the bully box that wasn't true - people could still do that, and that's just time wasting really
190. me: ok, so there needs to be some kind of ... everybody needs to know or whatever...
191. *DISCUSSION about how best to circulate their anti bullying questionnaire eg. people fill it in on computer in it lessons, people do it at home, just give to their own classes first etc.*
192. yp3: a lot of the time you're going to think 'i don't want my friends to see me writing this', so if you sit by your friend in form, and then we give these round, who's going to start writing 'i get bullied by lots of people' ... it's quite hard to solve it i think.
193. me: it is, and i think there is no one answer, i think that's the thing. so for some people they might feel like they can go on the internet, but for other people they might use the bully box in the library, for other people they might go and tell a teacher, and i think you need to make sure ...
194. INAUDIBLE chatter

## <sup>1</sup>APPENDIX 2.a

195. me: i think you need to make sure, or the school needs to make sure that the policy that it's got includes all of these different ways, so that there'll be something that suits everyone, do you know what i mean?
196. yp3: but a lot ... a lot of people don't feel confident enough to do something about it
197. me: no they don't
198. yp3: and you can't force people to go and see the head for bullying can you?
199. me: no
200. INAUDIBLE CHATTER
201. me: did other people know that? ... go on (name)...
202. yp1: at dinner times and after school there's a hut, and it's the 'confidentiality club' (confidentiality)
203. yp: oh yeah
204. yp: oh yeah
205. yp4: where?
206. yp1: over there
207. yp4: oh yeah

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208.       INAUDIBLE

209.       yp: did you know about that? i didn't

210.       yp2: i didn't know about it

211.       me: there you go. so this stuff about making sure that everybody in school knows about the policy, obviously is not going well so...

212.       yp3: but do you think some people would go there just to take the mick?

213.       me: possibly... but then some people will tell you lies when they answer your survey, some people will have said lies when they answered our survey. you just have to hope that enough young people tell you the truth, that you can do something with it really, and they will because ...

214.       yp2: i think when people are filling it in you need to have space between everyone.

215.       INAUDIBLE

216.       me: ok do you think there's anything else that maybe should become a law in Wales which could make bullying better, or which schools could be doing - or maybe things that could happen outside of school. any other ideas?

217.       yp3: i don't know because ...

218.       yp2: they should do something outside of school in ...

219.       yp3: police station? sweet shop? convenience store?

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220. yp2: no. youth clubs. a workshop
221. me: yay. so something in youth clubs maybe?
222. yp5: but if its a shit youth club like, people can do bullying
223. me: but maybe that makes it just as important then. cos maybe if you do a workshop around bullying, there might not be there that's bullying each other, but those people might be being bullied in school, so at least they're still getting the experience.
224. yp3: what about....in assemblies INAUDIBLE DUE TO DOOR OPENING where people give talks about their experience and it happening to them, and there was a policeman there telling us how you'd deal with it, what we class as bullying, and like all different things...
225. me: so do you think it'd be helpful for young people to know more about the effects of bullying? cos i know we've had a chat about what we think about ... but like you just spoke there about meeting people who's been in prison, and they said that they were bullied, so the effects might be in 10, or 20 years time...
226. yp5: yeah because if you haven't been bullied you just think that you know what the effects are but you don't really don't realise.
227. yp2: you don't know the effects on people who are actually being bullied.
228. INAUDIBLE CHATTER - TOO MANY TALKING AT ONCE
229. me: so do like an awareness raising in PSE week?

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230. yp3: they can do more like activities
231. yp: young people taking on different roles
232. yp2: everyone loves them cos they're funny
233. TEACHER INTERRUPTS: the problem with those things is that we've had a spending cut. do you remember the thing we did about road safety and contraception?
234. a few yp: yeah yeah
235. TEACHER: like the one we saw when we went to ...
236. a few yp: yeah
237. TEACHER: the problem is they're very expensive, like hundreds of pounds
238. yp4: well, couldn't we get the school to do something like then then sir?
239. TEACHER: well, the drama department might be interested in doing something
240. INAUDIBLE - TOO MANY PEOPLE TALKING
241. me: ok, is it break now sir?
242. TEACHER: it is yes.

## <sup>1</sup>APPENDIX 2.a

243. me: ok, thanks very much guys see you back here at 11.

244. NOISE AS EVERYONE LEAVES

245. *A conversation took place at break time with one young person who was experiencing bullying and wanted to talk to me about it. It would be inappropriate to include this chat as part of the research (even though the dictaphone was still recording). The young person did not want me to tell her teacher who was bullying her or anything, but did give permission to tell the school what bus she was on - as this is where most of the bullying happens. Therefore the teacher could at least monitor behaviour on this particular bus. The young person was happy with this way of moving things forward, and said she would consider speaking to the teacher if it still continued.*

246. End of recording

247. session 2

248. Me: last 20 seconds on that everyone ....

249. ... is everybody done...more or less? ... ok what did everybody have as their top then? What would be there favourite?

250. A few yp: trips

251. INAUDIBLE

252. Yp2: I put PE

253. INAUDIBLE



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254. Me: which did you put?
255. Yp: PE
256. Yp3: oh no, did we have to do lessons?
257. Me: no, no it's alright. So what you mean, that you like doing something physical or physical activity, as a way of leaning?
258. Yp: yeah
259. Me: people who put trips, did you put that because you think it's just nice to go out places, or do you think ...do you think if you go on a trip you learn more?
260. yp1: yeah you remember it
261. yp2: you get more memories
262. yp6: its a better experience
263. me: so if you get to experience it, it sort of makes it more 'real' for you?
264. yp6: yeah
265. yp5: ...rather than just hearing about it...
266. me: ok, so what did everybody have as their bottom one, so their least favourite?

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267. yp: homework
268. yp1: tests
269. yp3: teacher just talking in front of the class
270. yp4: I didn't even put that one!
271. Me: it didn't even make it onto the list!!
272. Yp4: no
273. yp2: i got tests and homework both at the bottom.
274. me: ok so does everyone ...so everybody's bottom 3, or more or less ...  
teacher talking to you, tests and homework?
275. all yp: yeah, yep, yes
276. yp5: I have tests, homework and worksheets
277. me: ok, so why do you think tests don't work then?
278. INAUDIBLE
279. yp: pressure
280. yp1: stress
281. yp: too much stress

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282. yp1: because...sometimes you do know stuff but then when it goes onto the test you might just get bad marks...
283. yp5: yeah, you might know it but like ... they should monitor you over the year rather than having to have a sit down exam.
284. yp3: yeah
285. INAUDIBLE
286. me: what josh was just saying was that sometimes you feel like - we're having a test, but we haven't really been taught that much, before we get to the test and sometimes do you feel as though the teachers are just teaching you the things that you need for the test, rather than things more as a whole?
287. A few yp: yeah
288. INAUDIBLE
289. Yp2: mind you we had this thing where we didn't even have any lessons before our 'cats' (?) tests
290. Me: what are cats tests
291. Yp: put you into sets
292. Yp2: yeah, just this thing to see how you are...
293. Me: ok, so what about being talked to by the teacher, what...why is that low down on your list?

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294. Yp2: because it just goes in one ear and out the other
295. Yp7: boring
296. Me: in one ear and out the other?
297. Yp5: you don't even listen very much do you, you're just like...
298. Me: you don't remember what they've said then?
299. A few yp: no
300. Yp1: when they shout at you, you might remember what they've said  
but...
301. Yp5: it's almost like talking to someone ... like talking to one of your  
friends... and like then expecting them to remember every single thing ...
302. ??: but if you had a conversation where someone just spoke for an hour,  
you would have just walked off after 20 minutes!
303. Yp4: erm, erm, ICT, erm they expect you to do it like all in one big go,  
like erm, mr erm mathews, gives you folders and sheets but that doesn't not  
really help as much cos he goes too fast.
304. INAUDIBLE DISCUSSION ABOUT A SPECIFIC TEACHER
305. Me: what else did people have around the top? So we've got trips and  
PE...

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306. Yp: practical
307. Me: what else?
308. Yp2: plays and music
309. Me: ok, so they're all kind of things that you DO aren't they, so even if it's ICT, it's something where you've got a task and you have to do it. Why do you think that's a good way of learning? Is that the same kind of thing as trips?
310. Yp4: I think you should have a video about the topic you're actually doing, cos then you get to actually see what's actually happened. Say like factories and everything ...instead of writing down about factories, you might have a bit more experience say...
311. OTHER YP INTERRUPTS INAUDIBLY
312. Me: so would you say videos might be a way of learning more without gong on a trip, rather than just being told about it?
313. Yp: yeah
314. Me: ok, so what is it about 'practicals' then that help you learn?
315. Mostly INAUDIBLE, but answers heard include: cos you're actually doing it, it's a taste of the work
316. Me: ok. Do you think sometimes practicals are about you finding out the answer to something yourself, and then you remember it more because you've worked it out?

317. Yp2: yeah
318. Yp3: it's like we're always...we're always... before we always used to research, and then we'd take about 8 lessons and we'd do a practical .. how much soap ...
319. Yp: oh yeah
320. Yp4: it was how fast does washing up liquid ...
321. Yp3: well, no we did how fast it falls out of the little tube.
322. Yp4: oh yeah
323. Yp5: yeah but not all practicals are like that. We did a really good one where we had to like set some pans on fire
324. INAUDIBLE
325. Me: what did that teach you?
326. Yp5: and everyone else could try it too, it wasn't just the teachers
327. Me: and did you learn from that?
328. Yp5: yeah
329. A FEW YP CHATTER
330. Me: ok, what did people have in the middle then? The stuff that you think

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331. is alright but...

332. Yp: powerpoint

333. Yp2: worksheets

334. Yp5: research

335. Me: research?

336. Yp6: powerpoint

337. Yp4: group activities

338. Me: group activities?

339. Yp3: and practical

340. Yp2: I put them nearer the top

341. CHATTER

342. Me: it's strange because everyone does learn slightly differently, and you've all got slightly different thoughts on it, but there's a general picture that being spoken to and just having to sit and listen is not good, homework's never good, tests are not good. But the more practical stuff you all really like yes?

343. Yp4: I really don't see the point of homework. Homework ... home's the only free time you get from school, and 2 days of school isn't enough to see your mum and dad. You already spend 6 hours in school, well you do need to have an education but I don't think it's right to have homework when home's the only

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344. free time you've got.
345. Me: do you think if they made homework more fun? More interesting?
346. Yp4: you could make it more .... Say when you get homework that's like word searches and that, that's alright, but like ...
347. Yp5: people always end up doing it the night before anyway and then
348. INAUDIBLE
349. Yp4: I sometimes don't do my homework, but then I get done for not handing it in, but my mum and dad ...
350. INAUDIBLE
351. Yp4: .... When you go home it's like 'how do I do this?', parents might not even get it, and then you go to school and you've got a detention.
352. Me: yeah, I know what you mean. My dad thinks he's really good at maths, but learned in the old days, so when I was struggling I'd say 'how do I do this?', and he's show me some weird way, then I'd get stressed out because that's not how we did it in my school! So there we are...so do other people find that sometimes when they get home with their homework they're more confused than they were when they were in class, especially with other people like your parents chipping in. okey dokey, what I wanted to do now (like we did with the bullying) was show you the stuff that came out of the 'Our rights our story' project, which is pretty similar to the stuff you've all been saying, so that's quite good.



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353. I WENT THROUGH RESULTS FROM OROS RELATING TO TEACHING METHODS.
354. RE: OLDER YP BEING LEAST HAPPY WITH METHODS
355. As you get older it gets more difficult.
356. As you get closer to your gcse's
357. They just concentrate on gcse's and exams
358. Maths already (year 9 pupil) is gcse work in class and at home, and if you don't do the homework he just puts you in detention. He makes us do higher paper in year 9.
359. He doesn't understand why we wouldn't get it.
360. A DISCUSSION WAS HAD ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN WITH THE YP'S OPINIONS AFTER TODAY.
361. We only get 3 PE's a fortnight. 3 hours a fortnight. It's not much is it.
362. Me: you guys have a strange timetable – you have 4 hours lessons before your lunch and just 1 hour after it – how's that?
363. Yp: crap. You end up eating all your lunch at morning break because you're starving and you know you won't make it til lunch time, but you get used to it.
364. It's good to turn lessons into games.
365. Using interactive whiteboards – helps us learn more and we enjoy it more.
366. Me: do any of you find lessons where you sit and listen to the teacher interesting or useful?
367. Yp6: depends who the teacher is. Yeah, some teachers just like

368.       bore...drone on and on...bu some teachers are like..
369.       Yp: interesting
370.       Yp6: yeah
371.       Me: I remember in school I used to enjoy lessons where you just got  
            spoken at because
372.       Yp3: you don't have to do any work
373.       Me: yeah, I could drift off into my own world and not do anything, but I  
            won't learning anything.
374.       Yp3: yeah, but then you can't do anything
375.       Yp4: and when you come to something that they think is really important  
            they go over it and over it and over it, but it goes in 1 ear and out the other. Then  
            the test comes along and they're wondering why we're getting a bad mark. I  
            reckon if we do like we do in French, like learning through websites and that,  
            then we can get ...
376.       Yp5: it's changing for us next year, with our course work – we're going  
            to have to do that in school
377.       Yp2: yeah, we're not allowed to take it home.
378.       I WENT THROUGH RECOMMENDATIONS OF OROS, AND THE  
            GROUP ADDED ANY THOUGHTS OR FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS  
            TO THE FLIPCHART (SEE SEPARATE WRITEUP).

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379. We should have meetings with teachers in each department, to discuss all of this stuff with them, cos I bet most other pupils would agree with us.
380. Teachers should put aside at least 1 lesson every 2 weeks to do something more fun, say like revision games etc.
381. Why aren't we allowed to chew chewing gum – for some people it helps them to concentrate?
382. If the time we spent in school was better it should be more than enough to have a good education – 6 hours a day 5 days a week.
383. Me: So you think that if the time you spent in school was used better, you'd learn more?
384. Yp: Yeah
385. INAUDIBLE
386. Yp3: you should have like an hour or 2 hour lesson, then a 20 minute break
387. Yp1: An hour lesson I reckon is a bit too long, maybe we could go back to the 6 ...
388. Yp: No... Sometimes an hours lesson feels so long, but sometimes not, depends what we're doing if it's more like PE it goes faster.
389. INAUDIBLE CHATTER
390. Me: do you think if you had lessons that were more active then it wouldn't really seem like an hour because sometimes it's not necessarily that

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391. you need a break where you go outside, or get something to eat.  
Sometimes you just need a break from 1 activity to another don't you?
392. YP7: yeah, cos you do tend to enjoy 'tech' or PE more cos you're doing something all the time.
393. Yp1: I don't like tech that much
394. YP TALKING OVER EACH OTHER : I like tech, I like it, I don't like it etc.
395. Yp3: yeah but have you seen some of the things that young people have made though? I mean they're amazing. They made an ipod dock and all of that. And ...
396. Yp7: people have to make the decision about whether they want to do all of that though.
397. Me: yeah, and like you say not every lesson is going to suit everybody but... a better variety basically – is that what we're saying, isn't it? Mix it up a bit more? Let's see what can happen. Ok, cool.
398. Right, does anyone want just a quick 5 minute break? Is anybody hungry, cos I've brought fruit? Bananas, apples, grapes.
399. BREAK
400. Next activity was the pro's and con's of punishment and reward – see additional writeup from flipchart notes *The recording contains the groups working on this activity, but it is largely incomprehensible. The groups fed back*

*to each other – this can be seen in the additional notes.*

401. *The group were shown information about what the UNCRC says about 'discipline', what the OROS findings were, and what the OROS recommendations were and asked to make comments.*

402. *On being told that the UNCRC says that discipline should not be used to humiliate young people.*

403. Yp1: I hate it when in English the teachers use your work as an example.

404. Me: do you mean as a bad example?

405. Yp1: yeah. Or when they tell you that you haven't got the answers right in front of everyone else like.

406. INAUDIBLE

407. *I continued to go through the OROS findings and recommendations.*

408. *On the issue of using trips as rewards:*

409. Yp7: it's not fair cos like we used to go on end of year trips that were fun like alton towers, but now we have to go on 'educational trips' all the time. So it's not like a reward.

410. Me: if it's anything like where I work that could be down to things like funding and not being allowed to spend money on certain things maybe.

411. Teacher: There are certain things that are out of the school's control as well. And if it's any consolation, the teachers would rather have a good day out at Alton Towers as well rather than necessarily going on a trip to Chester Zoo.

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412. Yp: Chester zoo's not that bad.
413. *Chatter about where other people had been on a trip, and what people's favourite alton towers ride is!*
414. Me: other things that OROS said were that young people felt that discipline and being strict were really important. What do you think about that then?
415. Yp6: yeah, you've got to have discipline, otherwise people will just start to run around wild.
416. Me: does everyone agree?
417. Yp5: yeah, but they take it too far.
418. Yp6: yeah some of them are just stupid.
419. Teacher: like what tom?
420. Yp6: like not being allowed to go on the field. Why can't we go on the field now? I know they say people might fall down the bank, but people could trip whatever weather it is.
421. Teacher: well, there's a couple of issues there. And noone's more aware than myself that ...but I know when me and my mates were in school we were out playing football all the time and we had tarmacked areas, and loads of them. Um we just haven't got that. The site of this school is not ideal. If you were building a new school, you wouldn't choose this site, beautiful though the area is

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and I appreciate what we've got, but it's not very practical. Umm, the problem with those fields at the moment is... and you can say health and safety's gone mad ...you know with this idea of you can't have conkers anymore and ...

422. Yp4: but I think people would be happier if they weren't made to go into the dining hall.

423. Teacher: but where would you eat your dinner?

424. Yp4: outside.

425. Teacher: you can't eat it outside – it's freezing!

426. Yp4: well yeah, but there's always too many people in there.

427. INAUDIBLE:

428. Yp2: what about when you have a lunch time activity? By the time you get through the crush, get changed ... you end up with a 5 minute activity!

429. Teacher: well, yeah we have a problem there. We have a 50minute lunch. You could have an hour's lunch, but then you'd be 10 minutes later going home.

430. Me: do any of you think that sometimes the issue with rules is that they're never explained why they are what they are? So sometimes, to you things might seem like a stupid rule, but somebody will have made it for a reason (although sometimes there are just stupid rules, not necessarily in this school, but in the world).

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431. Teacher: oh, I'm sure there are stupid rules here as well.
432. Me: but sometimes do you think because it's never been explained to you why you can't do that, or why you have to do that, so to you it feels stupid, but if someone sat and explained, and people understood more where the rules came from in the first place; do you think that that would be helpful? Do you think that would help people stick to them more?
433. Yp4: yeah
434. TEACHER *returns to the issue of the school canteen being too small – containing people in 1 room is helping to contain the litter – which is important for 'eco schools'.*
435. Yp3: Can I Just ask about something I mentioned last time we had a meeting, about the children who've not got enough ... erm, the pupils who have free school meals, but they're not getting enough money on their card or on their finger (*\*\*this particular school canteen has introduced a new system where pupils have their finger prints scanned and they can 'top up' their account with dinner money, and pay by swiping their finger. This is a new system, and so some students still have dinner 'cards'.*)
436. Teacher: yeah well, that is not set by the school, how much they ... the amount they get.
437. Yp3: yeah, I was just wondering cos ...
438. Yp7: and what's the point of having picnic tables outside if we're not allowed to use them?



439. Teacher: why can't you use them?

440. Yp7: cos we're not allowed.

441. Teacher: no, I think that is going to be a picnic area in the summer months. I think at the moment with the building work still going on, there are health and safety implications there, so ...it will be part of the plan.

442. INAUDIBLE

443. *Presentation of final OROS recommendation. – that punishment should have meaning, involve learning and be appropriate to what a person has done wrong. The group agreed this was a good idea – as did the teacher.*

444. I will write all of this information up, and make sure Mr. Evans gets a copy so that you can all look at it and decide if you want to work on any parts of it, or pass it to the head or whatever. Are you happy for me to do that? From FD's point of view, young people who are working on the next report for FD will be given the information that you've shared with me today – so I'll make sure that when that comes around, you get a copy of that as well – so you can see where you've been involved in that as well. And also I'll be using it to write a big massive essay for my master's degree, so that's where it will go as well. Once I've written it up, I'll get rid of all of the flipcharts etc. so no one can see who's said what exactly.

445. *The Group took part in an evaluation exercise.*

**Transcript of Group 2 High School Research Session**

**16<sup>th</sup> March 2010**

**9.30am – 11.30am**

16.03.10

1. Me: This is just literally going to be played in my house, where I'll sit on my own with headphones for hours going 'rewind, what did he say? Rewind'; and I'll write it up. But then once it's written up I'll delete it.
2. Yp4: me and ? need to leave early cos we've got to go to the canteen. Is that ok?
3. Me: of course. Yeah
4. Yp2: but how do we know that you're going to delete it. We've only got your word for it?!
5. Me: I cross my heart and hope to die, stick a needle in my eye – that I will delete it.
6. INAUDIBLE – some laughter.
7. Me: ok, those were some of the findings – what do people think about them? Is anybody shocked by the number of people that said they had been bullied?
8. Yp1: yeah. I think a lot of people think that they HAVE been bullied.
9. *Some inaudible chat.*
10. Me: Did you say you're surprised that more people didn't say that they'd been bullied?
11. Yp3: yeah

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12. Me: What about you? Are you shocked at all by that? Did you think it would be less people than that or more?
13. YP4: less.
14. Yp1: I reckon that most of the people who said they hadn't been bullied are probably the bullies that are bullying the people.
15. A few yp –'yeah'
16. Me: could be, could be
17. Yp1: how many times can I say 'bully' in a sentence?!
18. Me: right, ok. What about this business of anti-bullying policies? Have you got an anti-bullying policy in your school? Put your hand up if you have got a policy and you know what it says?
19. Yp1: I know we've got one
20. Yp5: I know we have got one.
21. Me: ok, we've only got 1 hand that up to say they know you've got one and they know what it says.
22. Yp5: Is it like peer listening or something?
23. Me: I don't know. I'm not sure what your school policy says.

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24. Yp6: It's for people who've got like problems and that, they can go and speak to the 6<sup>th</sup> formers

25. Yp2: we've got counselling in school. People can go and talk to a counsellor.

26. Me: if you were bullied, or if your friend was being bullied, would you know ... not necessarily what you would do, but would you know what you were supposed to do according to the school policy?

27. Yp2: go and tell the teacher

28. A few yp: 'yeah yeah, go and tell a teacher'

29. Me: ok. Lads... 40% of young people that were asked in this survey said that they didn't know about the anti-bullying policy in their school, so that's ... actually it seems like it might be even more that that probably in this room? Who doesn't know anything about the anti-bullying policy in this school?

30. Yp7: I think I do, but I couldn't tell you.

31. Me: counting..... that's probably about the same amount, so that's not great; and it must mean that a lot of people that are being bullied don't know really what to do about it. What about the fact that some young people ...some people said that they were being bullied on school transport? Does that ring a bell ...?

32. Yp7: I've heard 1. There's a guy in year 7. He can't get the school bus cos people chuck stuff at him so he has to walk, from like ..well, past Holywell.

33. Yp1: yeah

34. Yp7: about 2 miles away

35. Yp3: yeah. I'm not saying his name but I know.

36. Me: so that's a pretty extreme case then is it?

37. *Inaudible*

38. Yp7: no because he's quite ... he's quite erm... not the really the type of guy that would ...

39. Yp8: I think I know who you're on about.

40. *Chatter*

41. Me: Ok, we have another opinion ... lads ... lads... we have another opinion over here.

42. Yp2: Loads of people have trouble on the bus. Cos they'll have like loads of things in their bag, and they'll chuck them at you

43. Yp5: yeah, they chuck things off the bus as well and wet people

44. A few yp: yeah

45. Yp2: A lot of people ... they open the windows... and then you're walking on the pavements, and then they'll get the water bottles and ... every time you see a Mostyn bus you're like quick – everybody ...

46. *Laughter*

47. Me: Ok. SO I guess it's kind of difficult if you are being bullied on school transport thought because you've kind of got nowhere to go have you? You're stuck in this like...

48. Yp1: the toilet *Laughter*

49. Yp2: what?

50. Yp1: there's gonna be a toilet on the bus

51. Yp4: some of them do. Coaches.

52. *A discussion followed about whose busses had toilets on them.*

53. Me: what about the fact that people said that if they had been bullied, they were less likely to want to take part in any after school activities? Like sport or anything. What do you think about that?

54. Yp5: I reckon if they don't go then that's just their own fault cos they know that

55. *Laughter*

56. Yp8: I think that's a lie, cos I know quite a few people who go to after school clubs and they get bullied.

57. Yp1: a lot of people don't get bullied and they ...

58. Yp6: bullies don't got to the after school clubs anyway so ...cos they're off bullying other people.

59. *Laughter*

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60. Yp8: I think some people actually go to activities to get away from the bullies

61. Yp: yeah

62. Yp8: and to socialise with other people, like making friends and that ...

63. Yp5: we don't have many after school activities

64. Me: don't you?

65. Yp4: yeah, we do

66. Yp5: no we don't

67. Yp8: Yes. We do! There's stuff on a Monday night ...

68. *Chatter and volume rising*

69. Me: It might be that some of the young people who answered this question had such a miserable time in school that the last thing they wanted to do was hang around any longer.

70. Yp2: this is how .. can I say... I was in the leisure centre the other day, and this lad came in, and he had a different coloured tie on, and he goes 'what school do you go to?', so I go 'Holywell High', and I never saw him before because I think he got bullied and he'd like hide in the library I don't know his name. I really don't know. But I said 'what school do you go to?' and he went 'Holywell High', and I went 'Why have you got a different tie?', and he went ' I had to go to a school...to all the different schools for a meeting.', and I was like 'alright then'.

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71. Me: so you think he's possibly trying to move schools.
72. Yp2: I don't know. Cos it's something to do with his sister might be going to school, but ... I don't get it.
73. *Chatter while young people try to work out who this young person is.*
74. Me: ok, one of the things that this report did, ok, *chatter continues amongst group trying to identify young person.* One of the things this report did... Lads, seriously you're worse than my nan and her friends for chatting. One of the things that this report did was make a number of recommendations so when this report went to the UN in Geneva, young people had the chance to say 'we think this should happen, we think this should happen, we think this should happen', and then the UN then write back to the government in the UK and Wales, and they say 'you should do this this and this'. Hopefully they listen to the UN cos they're a bit more powerful than me! ... slightly! So some of the things that they recommended were that...oh I've put the wrong one up, ignore me, hang on... this one doesn't make any sense to what I was just telling you. Hang on it's over here. ... no it's not, it's there. There we are! ... ok, the things that they recommended were ...were that antibullying policies in schools should be promoted more so that everyone knows about them, so not just necessarily pupils, but anybody that works in the school should know about them so that everybody's doing the same thing and handling it in the same way. Erm... another thing they recommended was that antibullying policies should be written with young people to be sure that their needs are met, so if you guys had been asked to help out writing the policy, not only would you know about it, you'd know what was in it, and ...yeah?
75. Yp1: we'd say 1 thing and they'd write down something completely different.



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76. Me: well, yeah, that wouldn't be the idea. What this is saying is that young people should write the policies ... with teachers cos it has to be legal and all that business ... yeah?
77. Yp1: do you know when you play this back of the tape yeah, you're gonna hear yourself like talking about your nanna
78. Me: I won't let my nan hear it, so it's fine! So, yeah ... if the policies were written with you guys, it would make sense to you, you could say the things you want and you'd know all about it. Then they also said that more needs to be done to monitor how effective the policies are, so that they can be improved if needed. Erm... and that antibullying policies should cover out of school activities and journeys to and from school. So you should have the same kind of treatment whether you're on your way to school or in an after school activity as you would if you got bullied at break time or lunch time. Is there any of those that you disagree with? Or is there any that you want to add? Yeah?
79. Yp1: if you're in after school club right? And basically you get bullied in after school club they're just going to drop it. A lot of our teachers just drop it don't they? Say if you get bullied in an after school club they don't care. They don't give one do they?
80. Me: so you think that if after school clubs were causing trouble by people being bullied, they'd just drop them you think?
81. Yp1: no, they wouldn't stop them ...
82. Yp5: If you told a teacher you're getting bullied, they'd probably just ignore you.

## APPENDIX 2.b

83. Yp2: maybe just tell them, but they'll just basically tell you to 'get over it' like. Well, they don't really say that but most teachers like ... it's just ... most of the teachers like ...
84. Yp5: ...say come back if he does it again.
85. Yp2: yeah, come back if he does it again, and then you go back and they're like 'come back if it happens again'.
86. INAUDIBLE
87. Yp5: and then you back the next day and they're just like 'what can we do about it?!'
88. Me: guys, do you think if you knew... if your policy in school said 'if bullying is reported to a teacher, they must do, this, this and this' – if you knew what that was, then you could go back to them and say 'Miss I know that you're supposed to ... I'm telling you that I've been bullied, and I know that now you're supposed to do this, this and this' ...
89. Yp2: and they're probably have a go.
90. Yp1: they'll probably just say no that's not me, that's this teacher.
91. Yp3: most teachers can't be bothered to do anything, or they just don't know how to deal with it.
92. Me: so you think there's some teachers who don't know how to deal with it? And some that just can't be bothered?

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93. A few yp: yeah

94. INAUDIBLE

95. Yp4: if they're sitting there on their own in a class room and you go into talk to them, they'll go 'I'm a bit busy now'.

96. Yp7: yeah, this teacher yeah ... I'm not gonna say her name ... but remember we went to her when we were collecting money for ?? all I did was say 'does anyone want to make any donations for Haiti?', she came and she goes 'no I'm busy' and slammed the door in my face. ... And then she was like 'do not disturb my class ever again'. So I said it was disgusting, cos I thought it was, and she just goes 'yes it is disgusting, but I've got a class to teach'. And I was like 'yeah and Haiti people are dying!'

97. Me: maybe she had had a bad day.

98. Laughter and chatter

99. Me: guys, do you feel like some of the reaction you get form some teachers, do you feel like that would maybe stop you telling them that you were being bullied?

100. Yp1: yeah, cos some teachers ... sometimes you'll just walk into the classroom and go 'Hiya Miss', and she'll go 'WHAT DO YOU WANT?'

101. Laughter and chatter – inaudible.

102. Me: guys, you can't all talk at once!

103. Yp8: we're talking about all the nasty teachers but there are lots here who are not like that. There are nice ones.
104. *Chatter about a particular teacher that none of them would go to if they got bullied*
105. Me: guys, we don't need to mention teachers' names. That's of no use to me. SO you're saying there are some nice teachers about and you just have to pick carefully who you'd go to?
106. A few yp: yeah
107. Me: but then that might mean that those nice teachers end up really, really busy cos everyone wants to go to them! So maybe is there something about training for teachers?
108. Yp7: yeah, but maybe you don't want your situation in the hands of a teacher you dislike.
109. Yp4: they'd probably use it against you.
110. Yp1: no cos some people like ... like ... I don't ... when I was in primary ... and I'm not going to say any names but ...you could hear the teachers, the ones who aren't very nice all talking .. yeah you can hear ... talking about it, and then you hear it, someone bad hears it – like a 'spreader' or a bully ...
111. Laughter
112. Yp1: yeah a 'spreader' they like spread stuff as if it's on toast!

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113. Laughter and chatter
114. Me: so are you saying you don't trust your teachers? Is that what you're saying?
115. *Inaudible chatter*
116. Me: guys you can't all talk at once!
117. *More chatter and laughter*
118. Me: ok, we've all gone crazy! Is there anything else that you think schools should do to improve the bullying situation?
119. Yp4: teachers should take it more seriously.
120. Yp1: yeah, they need to take it more seriously. They might take it seriously like if you tell them, but they don't do nothing about it really.
121. Me: so do you think they need training?
122. A few yp: yeah
123. Yp7: all they do ... they should all have like a powerpoint thing on how to ...
124. Yp1: do you know what I reckon? We get all the teachers ... every single teacher in the hall , to come up with a poster, and us ...no y'know like we're doing now, like we're doing now, and we're doing all this. Maybe teachers do something.

**APPENDIX 2.b**

125. Yp6: but they do know don't they?
126. Yp1: well no!
127. INAUDIBLE
128. Me: but maybe like you said they need training on what to do cos if I ... if someone tells you something horrible that has happened to them, then you might think 'Oh god, that's a hell of a responsibility you've just given me to have that information, and I don't know what to do with it'. So maybe there does need to be stuff like more training and more support for teachers to make sure they know what they're doing.
129. Yp5: exactly
130. Yp2: if you put training for teachers in their own time they'd just go home.
131. Yp8: I think ... INAUDIBLE CHATTING ... we need to stop putting it on the teachers cos I just think that ... I don't know ... I think it's hard, but I think we're all just a bit too 'criticisable' of the teachers.
132. A few yp: yeah
133. Yp8: I mean like we just don't ... you know when you said about the peer listening thing, like where's that gone now ...
134. Yp1: they've scrapped that
135. Yp8: yeah, nobody used it

## APPENDIX 2.b

136. Yp2: cos you tell them something and it goes over their heads
137. Me: so there is a peer listening thing in this school or that has been?
138. Yp5: there has
139. Yp7: it got closed.
140. Me: cos nobody used it?
141. Yp7: well, 1 or 2 people
142. Me: but not enough people to keep it going? Is that what ...
143. Yp5: but they should keep it going even if there wasn't enough people going, cos ...
144. Yp7: yeah, I mean people that were like really getting bullied, they did go. But then people who just get name calling or that now and again, they didn't go, so it wasn't helping like everyone.
145. Yp5: but it was in ...this like ??? so I wouldn't have gone there, .. I wouldn't have gone there.
146. Yp1: no, same.
147. Yp5: but like, with Mrs Richard's room downstairs, everyone's like ...always in... well, they're not now... but they always used to be in there, so they should put it like in there where everyone goes. Then people would go in,

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rather than it being like in a corner and people can see you go in there and knows why you're In there and all that.

148. Yp: yeah

149. Yp7: in the room downstairs there used to be like playstations and all that, and people could just go in. It was like – not a big deal.

150. Me: that's a good idea. Do you think that's anything that as a school council you might wanna put forward?

151. A few yp: yeah!!

152. Yp4: we're not allowed to be inside at break, you've got to be outside, so that pretty much ...

153. Yp2: yeah, they have people on the doors and you're only allowed to come in the building if you've got ...

154. Yp1: can I say something? ... if they made a bully room with like x box's and computers. CHATTER. No, but then I would want to be bullied.

155. LAUGHTER

156. Yp1: and then the bullies would be like 'well why haven't we got a room?', and then all the other people would be like ...

157. Me: you have such a vivid imagination. Anything else that you guys think ...



158. Yp1: you'd just walk in there and ...
159. Me: right ... laughing ... you're not allowed to speak...for 5 minutes – just to give everybody else ago...anything else that you think ...anything else that people think schools should be doing to improve the bullying situation?
160. Yp1: I'm not allowed to speak
161. Yp9: erm there's one ... everyone knows who it is, but there's like 1 lad in school, and he's always by himself and even like the teachers are just like 'uhhh'. They're used to him being bullied, but like it must be horrible for him cos he's like ... he doesn't go to the canteen or anything, and like in between lessons he goes into another class and waits for everyone to go...
162. Yp5: and you're not allowed into class rooms, cos teachers shout 'get out!'
163. Yp9: but he's scared of people.
164. Yp4: yeah but a lot of times, say the teachers are passing something and they'll go 'ooh' ...
165. Yp5: but even the teachers just like ignore it now cos it's like ... it's been happening ...
166. Yp2: yeah
167. Inaudible

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168. Yp4: but it happens like just in the corridors and he's just passing a class they'll like just look at him and carry on walking.
169. Inaudible
170. Me: but then if he did want any help, he'd probably think 'well there's no point in me asking'
171. Yp1: but people call him ...
172. Yp9: but it's the 6<sup>th</sup> form doing it and he's in 6<sup>th</sup> form, and so it's obviously people wind him up, he's not gonna go ...
173. Yp2: there's a lad in my year who people like shout like names and like he proper screams .. he proper kicks off. Really like stamps his feet and everything, and shouts.
174. Yp1: can I say something?
175. Me: hang on. It's him then you.
176. Yp2: this group were calling him a specific name and then he'll just flip on people, he will.
177. Yp1: they had erm... there's only one teacher ... there's only 1 teacher in the school, that I think his form tutor is ... is it Mr Baxter. Yeah and *chatter* ...
178. Yp7: yeah he eats his lunch with Mr Baxter
- 179.

**APPENDIX 2.b**

180. Yp2: yeah and once, also once, there's steps by English and we were walking down yeah and he had ... eczema did he? And people were like 'what's happened to you?' and he was like 'It's eczema!!' and just yelled and he was just like stamping his feet and ran off.
181. Yp5: yeah but the problem is people don't ... I mean he comes to school and he doesn't have 1 friend...
182. Yp2: he used to have loads of friends but like ... he did!
183. Yp6: but no one likes him no more
184. Yp1: he did have loads of friends and then he started ...
185. Yp5: it wasn't cos no one liked him it's cos he's different.
186. *Chatter.*
187. Yp1: there was no need for him to go off like that though.
188. Me: yeah, but probably if everyone's been saying it to him, it was maybe the last straw.
189. Yp7: yeah and usually bullies have been bullied themselves so they know what it's like to have people having a go at you and stuff. But people have a go at him every day.
190. Me: yeah, now and again, it's bound to get a bit much. Anyway, shall we move on from bullying ... oh, we've only got 20 minutes left.

## APPENDIX 2.b

191. Yp4: can we leave in 10 cos it takes ages to get to the canteen?
192. Me: yes, of course. What I'm going to do is split you up into 3 groups ...
193. End of recording – as group took part in 'teaching methods' exercise.
194. Me: which method do you think teachers use most?
195. A few yp: learning intentions
196. Yp1: and they just sit like this ...
197. Me: is there a lot of that do you think? A lot of just sitting and talking ...
198. A few yp: yeah
199. Inaudible
200. Me: so you're saying there's a lot of times where teachers just go 'right here's a book, turn to page so-and-so and do what it says'?
201. Inaudible
202. Yp5: there are some teachers yeah ... you know like Miss ?? ... if she gets something wrong and we correct her, she just goes 'oh I was just testing you!'. She gets something wrong every lesson.
203. Yp1: she says yeah, if you've got a question ask the person next to you. You ask the person next to you and if you even say 'a...' she go 'ah, 1 minute!!'

**APPENDIX 2.b**

204. Me: ok, moving on from one particular teacher, when you think about all of the lessons you have, what's the thing that you do most of? Is it a teacher standing at the front talking to you and you've got to write notes or is it hand outs or ...
205. Yp1: interactive board
206. Yp3: probably projector cos we've got them in every classroom.
207. Me: so like presentations and stuff?
208. Yp1: we don't have the interactive boards in geography cos they don't use them...
209. Yp5: that's cos they're old school, they use chalk boards ...
210. Me: chalk boards? Blimey! Ok guys we're going to do 1 more thing that doesn't involve us talking to anyone else, which should be marvellous – a 5 minute sit down.
211. Yp4: but this would be rubbish if we didn't talk to anybody, you'd be like yeah whatever.
212. Yp2: yeah, you said if you've got your opinions say them!
213. *Chatter and laughter*
214. *Young people took part in the activity 'If I were headteacher ...'*

**APPENDIX 2.b**

215. At the end of the session I thanked the group, and told them how to get in touch (via FD website) if there was anything else they wanted to say about what they'd talked about today.

216. End of recording.

**Appendix 2.c****Transcript of Group 3 Grand Council Members****25<sup>th</sup> September 2010****2pm – 4pm**

1. Me: So, tell me what do you think about the punishments and rewards that schools use then?
2. Yp1: what rewards?!
3. A few young people laugh
4. Yp2: it's usually punishments for doing something wrong, it's not ... you don't usually get much rewards for doing something good.
5. Me: ok, what do other people think about that? Do you think that's true?
6. Yp1: yep
7. Yp3: I do
8. Yp4: yes, I can't think of anything ... there are no rewards in school I don't think
9. Yp1: me either
10. Me: right, and why do you think that schools ... and some of the teachers you all know ... why do you think that they seem to use punishments for negative stuff, and not rewards for people when they do something good or positive?
11. Yp3: probably just 'cos giving out punishments is easier for them I reckon.

**Appendix 2.c**

12. A few young people say 'yeah' in agreement.
13. Yp5: plus it's not like as if schools have got loads of money to throw about the place ... and I mean ... I suppose the thing about rewards ... giving rewards to people, is that it's got to cost money.... So I'd say it's cheaper to punish than reward.
14. Me: does anyone know of any rewards ... do any of your schools give any kind of rewards at all?
15. Yp6: mine does sometimes ... but like ... they're not anything worth any ... they're never anything you would really feel chuffed to get. .. i think like a sticker or something ... rewards are crap ... a sticker?!!
16. Yp3: I wouldn't really mind that though ...
17. Laughter
18. Yp3: ... no, no ... but what I mean is .... It's not really about ... well, it's not just about what you actually get given as a prize or reward thing ... it's more just about ... or it can be about somebody just saying well done ... like if you even get told you're doing well, you can get such a buzz.
19. Yp6: yeah, I think that could be true for some people ... I don't think you get told enough ... like given enough praise or anything like that really.
20. Yp1: yeah, more attention is given to negative behaviour than good behaviour I think, ... definitely.
- 21.



**Appendix 2.c**

22. Yp7: in class and that ... y'know when people are like kicking off, or ... not even kicking off really...but even just talking and maybe like disrupting a bit ... then the teacher usually spends ages trying to get them to like shut up ... or like stop whatever they're doing. I wouldn't spend dead loads of time sort of like persuading them to be good, I'd just make them get out!!
23. A few young people laugh. Then inaudible chatter amongst the group.
24. Me: right! Ok, so anyone got any more examples of rewards that they have seen or anything else you think about rewards being used in schools?
25. Yp2: yeah in my school ... if you're bad in my school, you get put on a thing .. you get put on a 'trial'. Then if you're on that trial and you get like ... or you show signs of improvement then you get a reward...but...if you're always good, and never get put on the trial thingy, then you get no reward! So you're better being naughty a bit, and then like, pretending that you've got a bit better, just so you can get the reward!
26. Yp8: true. I might try it next week!
27. Laughter.
28. Me: so, you think rewards should be used for everyone, not just for those people who often misbehave ... or not even that ... but maybe those young people who don't achieve very well, or need more support, or misbehave ... all of that. You think rewards should be used for everyone ... including those who never get into trouble?
29. Yp1: yep

30. Yp3: yes

31. Yp8: yeah because I just think it's just ...it's sort of like disheartening that you can stress, and like ... try really hard all the way through school, but you end up...you don't get as much support and encouragement as like, those people who might be struggling, or like not even trying.

32. Yp9: yeah, I agree with that, and you sort of like think ... what's the point? And like I obviously know what the point is ... and to get a job and all that kind of thing but still ... at the time...

33. Yp2: I do get why people need extra attention sometimes, but I think like ... everyone might have some problems ... like I might have problems at home, but still behave in school or whatever ...so like the teachers wouldn't know really ... but then I wouldn't get any special treatment, just because I might not let it ... like let stuff get in the way of school ... so that's not really fair.

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