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INSPIRING SCHOOLS
IMPACT AND OUTCOMES
TAKING UP THE CHALLENGE OF PUPIL PARTICIPATION

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CONTENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to search for evidence of the **impact** of student participation in schools and colleges. It used a definition of **participation** as **involvement in a collective decision-making process with a recognisable social and/or educational outcome.** It therefore limited the search to:

a) a focus on participation in *decision-making* (that is, not just any 'taking part' in school or lessons);

b) a focus on impact and outcomes (that is, not just being descriptive of participatory activities, or evaluating materials and toolkits).

Seventy five studies, mainly from UK, but also internationally, were scrutinised. An annotated bibliography to support this study was produced and is published separately online (www.carnegie-youth.org.uk).

The review has been able to identify consensus on **positive and definite outcomes** from a range of participation activities, such as community involvement, school councils, and committee work. In the review, these outcomes were categorised under three main headings: personal; school; and outside school.

The review also notes a number of problems of the **evidence base** of the literature – for example, that it is mostly perceptual, that direct causation or attribution is problematic, that there is generally an uncritical presentation of participation or of the quality of student input, that there is a lack of balance shown between benefits and costs, and there is little discussion of whether outcomes could be achieved in different ways.

PERSONAL AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Firstly, there is a link with academic achievement. The association was indirect, but there was clear consensus that:

- students in more democratic schools were happier and felt more in control of their learning;

- if students gave feedback on teaching, this had the twin effect of teachers' practice improving and students gaining in awareness of the learning process;

- **participation enhanced skills of communication** and competence as a learner;

- skills in specific curriculum areas such as citizenship improved, as well as in other curriculum areas.

The evidence of any impact on academic achievement of participation in extra-curricular activities was however not so clear cut.

A second, and linked personal outcome is greater **self-esteem and confidence**. This came from taking responsibility and having a sense of ownership of various aspects of school life. Increased confidence was particularly apparent for school councillors and others taking a public role. It was also apparent for those with special needs, who gained a stronger sense of self-belief and engagement in learning.

Interpersonal and political skills were enhanced, particularly through community and voluntary work. Participation in school and outside was an apprenticeship in democracy, where skills of speaking, listening to the views of others, advocacy, argument, negotiation, compromise and teamwork could be practised.

A final aspect of personal impact was that of **agency and efficacy**. Students felt they could influence events and school structures, and had a greater sense of direction of their own lives.

IMPLICATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS

OUTCOMES FOR SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM

These related to the broad issues of school ethos, atmosphere, belonging and trust. Better teacher-student relationships emerged, as students felt they were listened to, and teachers felt students understood their role. Students participating in interviews for new staff and/or a principal gave them a feeling of ownership as well as making better appointments.

School organisation was also enhanced:

- School councils were able to influence directly the running of the school, with more informed decisions made.

- Student involvement in planning of curriculum and teaching methods again helped in the development of curriculum, assessment and pedagogy.

- Studies reported a range of governance issues that students were involved in: the school mission statement, school development plan, departmental reviews, school facilities, new buildings and safety.

- Students were involved in programmes of change, engaging with contractors or meal providers.

Behaviour was improved (although this focussed mainly on students rather than teachers). This was achieved through participation in behaviour, bullying and peer support policies, and generating an ethos of care. Behaviour also improved through involvement in community work and mini-enterprises, where students are treated more as adults.

OUTCOMES OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

These related firstly to specific inputs into **community improvement**, either through involvement in local councils or through direct projects to prevent violence or theft, or to enhance the environment. Students reported feeling they were able to make a difference. There were a few mentions of beneficial impact on families, and on home-school relationships.

Evidence of impact at **national or international level** was understandably rarer, but there were instances of pupils influencing national education policy (although in Europe and Australia rather than UK). Those students taking part in participatory and volunteering activities report being more likely to vote in the future and being an **active citizen**, and there are a few longitudinal studies to support this. Global outcomes would relate to fund-raising and charity work , but also to participation in campaigns and protests.

A number of **issues and constraints** in participation emerged, summarised under six themes:

- the need for whole school structures or activities, rather than confining participation to an elite or to a segment of the school;

- the scope and extent of participation activities;

- time and opportunity costs;

- existing attitudes and orientations by teachers;

- the nature of consultation;

- the motives for introducing participation (ie whether it is seen primarily as a way to control pupils rather than empower them).

The review summarises all the above by listing the **different types of participation 'input'** and their attributed outcomes, with the inputs including school councils and democratic school structures, community service or projects, pupil consultation on teaching and learning, small group task forces, representation on local or national committees and forums, student- led research, mini-enterprises, peer support, and international links and fund raising.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS, LEAS AND FUNDERS

The evidence suggests that participatory schools often have improved academic achievement, more confident and skilled students and happier staff. This applies across a range of state and independent schools, advantaged and disadvantaged schools, mainstream and special schools, and all age ranges. The implication is that the improvement of standards may be less about self-governing schools, eg. city academies, trust schools and more about the internal workings of the school.

It would be far cheaper and more cost-effective therefore to fund a national programme of student participation in decision-making in all schools than to focus on the creation of specialisms and choice.

Those schools which are exploring avenues for pupil voice and participation may need some support. Strategies need careful thought if teachers are not to feel threatened and students are not to feel that initiatives are tokenistic. Top down commitment from the head appears to be crucial, and networks of support and exchange across schools are important. In developing school councils, training is required for heads and teachers as well as students, and this implies a (modest) budget.

While there is a cumulative consensus from all the existing research, more studies are needed which:

a) move beyond perceptions of students and teachers

b) evaluate the hidden costs of the activities

c) explore the links between participatory activities and formal teaching and learning

d) evaluate the quality of student inputs and

e) explore the potential for direct democratic accountability as well as likelihood of voting.

This implies a number of action research and/or longitudinal studies which identify desired outcomes and have specific indicators for evaluation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

It is well worth taking the risk of student participation. No study reported a school returning to less democratic forms, or a major catastrophe because students were more involved. On the contrary (and in spite of various costs and challenges), there was uniform agreement that student participation had brought noticeable benefits to students, to the school and sometimes to the community.

Given the association with improved examination results and self-esteem as well as behaviour, the logic is that this participation needs to cut across the entire school or college. Given the personal benefits, participation in decision-making must be seen as an entitlement for every student.

A range of long-term and short-term strategies need to be considered for all students to participate (if they wish); it is not enough just to have representative structures. Such initiatives might include:

- Developing highly active school councils and/or other representative structures, but equally encouraging the maximum participation of all students through class, form and year councils.

- Encouraging a range of permanent committees and specific task forces, with students working with teachers (and sometimes parents) on long-term and short-term issues.

- Encouraging community work, community research or mini-enterprise in a range of curriculum areas, in order to involve all the students of a school and give a sense of efficacy.

- Involving students in decisions about teaching and learning, through consultation, feedback to teachers, curriculum committee work, research on classroom practices, appointments of staff.

- Exploring remote participation through ICT, mail or outreach work.

- Researching the impact of participation – using students and teachers as researchers, with the triple effect of systematically evaluating impact, of enhancing students' research skills and of giving students even more responsibility and ownership.

It should be noted that participation is not just for better discipline or control of students, but to encourage more equity, democracy and respect generally: for example, school rules and codes of conduct drawn up in a participative way should apply to teachers as well as students. Teachers can usefully model participation in the community.

IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENTS

- Participation is good for your health! Get involved!

- A school where students are involved in decision-making can have better exam results as well as happier students and staff. But participation should not just be about better discipline of students – make sure that in taking part in drawing up school rules for behaviour, for example, these rules include teachers and other staff, so that school democracy applies to all.

- Some teachers might see student **voice** as simply complaining or criticising. Offer positive suggestions for how to improve the timetable, the toilets, school food or the homework policy. Find out what other schools are doing through organisations such as ESSA (English Secondary Students Association).

- Offer to set up a student group to research teaching and learning, to watch lessons and give feedback to teachers. Note that this probably requires some training as well as finding ways to be objective and systematic, so that teachers appreciate your help rather than feeling threatened.

- Stand for election for class, form or school council. Try to ensure that councils get involved in teaching and learning as well as school facilities.

- Set up an action committee on a particular issue – local issues such as the environment, violence or leisure facilities; school issues such as pupil behaviour, bullying or disruption.

- Look on the internet for ways to be involved in national or international young people's forums and pressure groups (e.g. UNICEF, DFID, Amnesty, Student Stop the War Coalition, G8).

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSPECTORS

Pupil participation in decision-making should be a part of inspection, with specific criteria, for example that:

- forums for pupil participation in decision making exist.

- such forums are known and understood by all pupils and staff in the school.

- curriculum teaching relates appropriately to the work of these forums (e.g. understanding democracy and the DfES and related agencies, oral and written skills).

- there is evidence that such forums are effective in contributing appropriately to decision-making and change.

- all children feel that they are involved in decision making that affects them, even if they are not part of a formal forum.

Inspectors should provide a clear narrative about pupil involvement in decision making, highlighting good and/or problematic practice, and potential areas for development.

Inspectors should assess staff awareness of relevant national initiatives (for example DfES 'Building a culture of participation') and provide appropriate advice.

Pupils should understand and participate fully in the inspection process – they should make active contributions rather than being mere subjects of an inspection. There could be further developments in making Ofsted publications accessible to young people.

If pupils feel that any aspect of an Ofsted report is inaccurate or misleading, this should be facilitated, independently if necessary, to make their views known.

QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND EVALUATION INCLUDE:

- how direct causation and agency can be identified,

- how 'passive participation' can be assessed,

- how 'good practice' can be scaled up, how leadership style can be assessed and replicated and how the hidden costs of participation can be evaluated,

- how the quality of student inputs can be assessed,

- how better linkages between participatory activities and formal teaching and learning can be encouraged and evaluated.

INTRODUCTION BY CARNEGIE YOUNG PEOPLE INITIATIVE AND THE ESMÉE FAIRBAIRN FOUNDATION

Since the launch of the Citizenship Curriculum in England, many schools have started to embrace pupil participation. Policy makers, practitioners and young people are keen for more opportunities for students to influence decisions made in schools and the wider community. This powerful message of support has generated wider interest in student voice from Ofsted (2004), Specialist Schools Trust (2004), and the Home Office (2003). As commitment grows, pupil participation is becoming established as an important tool in school improvement.

It was in this context that the Carnegie Young People Initiative - as part of the Carnegie UK Trust - and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation came together in Spring 2005 to explore ways of gaining a better understanding of the impact of pupil participation on schools. Both organisations already had active interest in young people's involvement in decision making across the UK. As two independent organisations, we recognised that our strength lay in our ability to take an objective and non-partisan view. Owing to time constraints, we agreed to focus specifically on secondary schools in England but hope that our findings will be relevant across the UK and beyond.

In the process of devising this jointly funded research, we unearthed a number of pre-existing projects and resources supporting pupil participation. We were keen to add value to these and identified three key questions that would enhance our knowledge of work in the field:

1. What evidence is there for the impact of increased pupil participation on students, schools or the wider community?

2. What approaches are used by schools to increase pupil voice?

3. How can we best support schools that want to develop pupil participation?

This report addresses the first of our three questions, looking at existing research evidence on the impact of pupil participation. We appointed Professor Lynn Davies' team at the University of Birmingham's Centre for International Education and Research to do the work. Her team did not start with an assumption that all pupil participation is necessarily beneficial.

Although the team drew mostly on evidence from secondary schools in England, it also used evidence from across the UK and beyond. For the purposes of the study, we agreed that participation should be defined as pupils influencing decision-making processes, and not just taking part. We were also clear that all literature cited in the report should offer clear evidence of impact and benefits. With so many valuable reports and evaluations submitted, it was not always easy for the team to maintain a hard line.

Bearing in mind the stringency of our criteria, we were pleased with the healthy range of literature on pupil participation uncovered by the Birmingham team. Despite the obvious concerns about direct causation and attribution, there is some compelling evidence to support the fact that pupil voice can have a positive impact on pupils and schools. This evidence is key if we are to persuade more schools to adopt their own pupil participation strategies in the longer term as part of whole school policy and practice.

We hope that this report will help schools to develop pupil voice and participation strategies and will inspire practitioners and policy makers to consider the added value that pupil voice can bring to decision-making processes.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we believe that this work takes us a little closer to understanding the impact of pupil voice in schools. This evidence should help to ensure that pupils play an increasing role in school decision-making processes.

CARNEGIE SCHOOLS ADVISORY GROUP

This work was supported by an Advisory Group chaired by Professor Jean Rudduck from Cambridge University. Previously a secondary school teacher, Professor Rudduck has a close interest in pupil voice and participation. She led on an ESRC funded project - Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning Project (2001-2004 www.consultingpupils.co.uk which made a very strong case for pupil voice in schools, through research, practical toolkits and conferences). We are very grateful to Jean and other members of the Advisory group for the time and energy they committed to this work.

Full list of Advisory Group Members:

Amy Ark Save The Children
Tom Burke Member of The Carnegie Young Person Advisory Group
Liz Craft QCA
Lynn Davies University Of Birmingham
Lee Jerome Anglia Polytechnic University
David Kerr NfER
Jan Newton DfES
Sally Stenton Freelance Consultant

FURTHER WORK

This report is the first of three publications that the Carnegie Young People Initiative and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation have produced with the team at Birmingham University. The second of these publications is an annotated bibliography that can be found at www.carnegie-youth.org.uk and the third is a series of case studies that focus on different ways of developing participation in schools. We also plan to produce a separate resource for schools, offering practical guidance on student voice.

Another piece of work linked to these publications, in partnership with Save the Children will result in an online resource to inform people about existing pupil participation projects. A website will launch in June 2006, www.participationforschools.org.uk

ABOUT THE CARNEGIE YOUNG PEOPLE INITIATIVE

The Carnegie Young People Initiative (CYPI) is a programme of the Carnegie UK Trust and exists to improve policy and practice around young people's participation. It set up the Participation Worker's Network for England which provides support for practitioners and opportunities for networking online and at events. The Network is a strand of participationworks.org.uk set up by a partnership of organisations, including the Carnegie Young People Initiative.

The Carnegie UK Trust is an independent foundation set up Andrew Carnegie. One of 23 Carnegie Institutions and Foundations worldwide, it is dedicated to supporting progressive social change. Recently, the Trust has funded a number of projects that support student involvement in decision making. These include the IPPR's Teenage Governors pilot project, Citizenship Foundation's Youth Act pilots, and the development of the English Secondary Students Association.

ABOUT THE ESMÉE FAIRBAIRN FOUNDATION

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation is one of the largest foundations in the UK, making grants to organisations, which aim to improve the quality of life for people and communities. The Foundation distributes about £30m of grants per year in four areas: Arts and Heritage; Education; Environment and Social Enterprise and Independence. Within its Education programme, the Foundation prioritises new approaches to education and work with hard-to-reach learners. Over the past two years it has taken an increasing interest in projects that give pupils and parents a greater say in educational decision-making. Examples of recent work include a grant to School Councils UK to improve the effectiveness of councils in London secondary schools and a grant to Coram Foundation to increase young children's involvement in planning early years' services.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

As explained in the Introduction, a team from the Centre for International Education and Research at the University of Birmingham was commissioned to investigate the existing research on the impact and benefits of school/college and community participation. The rationale for this work was that while there was much material which argued for young people's participation in decisions that affected them, and while there were many examples of educational contexts where this did happen, there was much less evidence of whether such participation actually had benefits, and for whom.

The process for the literature review established by the team, was that for each source, an abstract or summary would be generated which contained:

a) a description of the study, article or book

b) outcomes of participation

c) inputs/activities related to participation

d) challenges in participation (if identified)

e) research methods (where appropriate)

This report is a critical analysis of the literature we uncovered. An annotated bibliography which contains these abstracts can be found in a separate document summarised online at www.carnegie-youth.org.uk. To help readability, in this report, the references are listed at the back, with a number in the text to refer to the relevant source.

The broad purpose of the whole project is to assist different teachers and others setting up participatory programmes and activities, and those who want to improve schools to overcome the main challenges. We work on the assumption that schools are busy places and want to identify specific participatory activities to address particular priorities.

A number of questions emerge. As with any democracy, when is participation appropriate and timely? When is it not? What is the investment time scale? Are there examples of ways to bypass bureaucracy through pupil participation? Whose point of view on participation is to be taken? (for example, children may not actually want a close home-school relationship, for parents to participate in their school life; teachers may see participation simply as unquestioningly taking part in teacher-directed question-and-answer sessions).

We did not begin with the assumption that all participation is useful, or that impacts are unequivocally acceptable to all stakeholders. We also found many issues surrounding the suppositions, evidence base and the methodology for researching or evaluating the impact of participation, and these concerns are developed in Chapter 3 of this report. However, this third chapter is not simply a critique. It provides a set of questions for future work, research and evaluation. The report is thus structured in terms of the generally positive - what the studies find, say and claim about participation, followed by some critical commentary and reservations.

THE FOCUS OF 'PARTICIPATION' IN THE STUDY

There are many definitions of participation in education, with varying degrees of specificity. Flutter and Ruddock[21], for example, talk of 'inclusion or membership of a community in which pupils are valued and respected contributors'. Significantly, the National Healthy Schools Standard quote the DfES' (2004) definition – and its claim:

Pupil participation, in practice, means opening up opportunities for decision-making with children and young people as partners engaging in dialogue, conflict resolution, negotiation and compromise – all important life skills. Children and young people's personal development and our democracy will benefit from their learning about sharing power, as well as taking and sharing responsibility. (Blake & Francis)

As Hill et al[33] point out, this DfES report **'adopts a broad definition, ranging from consultation with children and parents to the direct involvement of children [and parents] in decision-making about matters that affect their lives, whether individually or collectively'**. This latter aspect is closer to the definition by the human rights activist Gerison Lansdown, which Flutter and Ruddock[21] quote: **'Participation can be defined as the process of sharing in decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives'**.

Thomson and Holdsworth[75] in Australia have a useful five level model or continuum of different types of participation by young people in education:

- Being physically present at school,

- Being involved in school and taking part in lessons and activities,

- Involvement in formal school decision-making (consultation, committees),

- Initiating, deciding and acting in the school and beyond (e.g. neighbourhood capacity building),

- Community or social activism or **'**organising**'** (projects on human rights, environment, protests against the war in Iraq).

Our study confines itself to the last three of these levels. In the wider pupil participation project devised by the Carnegie Young People Initiative, there are three key areas:

- Curriculum – ways in which young people are involved in their own learning.

- Culture and governance – how young people are involved in school-based decision-making.

- Community – ways in which students and the school engage in partnerships with local community initiatives.

We have not structured the review in quite this way, although it obviously tackles each dimension. There are two key boundaries around what we have examined:

1. The focus is on participation in decision-making (that is, not just any taking part)

2. The focus is on impact (that is, not just description of activities, or evaluating materials and toolkits).
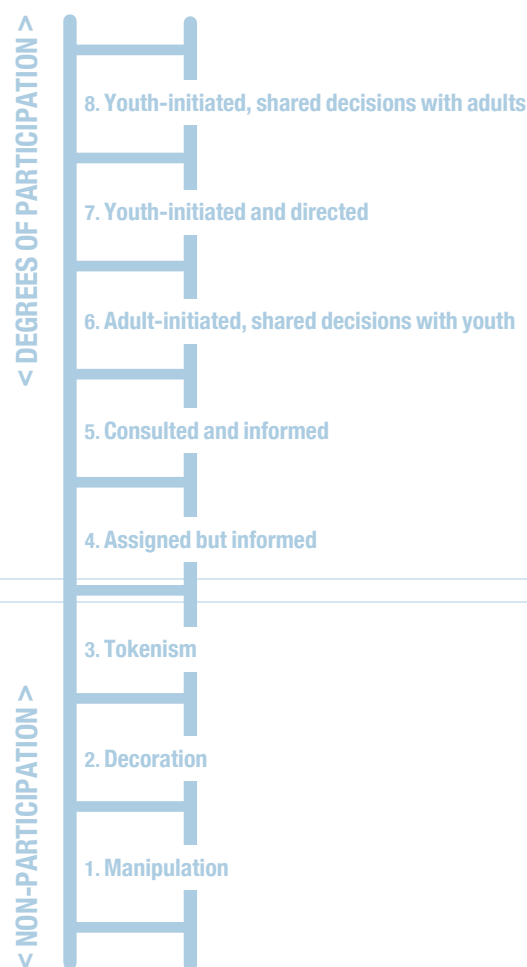
It is telling that the DfES still defines participation in terms of the three dimensions described in the Crick Report on Citizenship Education – social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy. The third of these is to include pupils **'learning how to make themselves effective in the life of the nation, locally, regionally and nationally'**. This would imply the need to find ways to assess this effectiveness, that is, what the impact has been. On the same website is guidance on recognizing achievement in citizenship, which talks of GCSE short courses, certificates and 'other awards. It also draws attention to the case studies of schools on the Teachernet site which illustrate various sorts of community activity that should be recognized as achievements. Ofsted has a framework criteria that includes looking for learners participating **'individually and collectively'** in decisions that affect them.

In terms of conceptual activity, we have thus confined participation to a definition of

involvement in a collective decision-making process with a recognizable social and/or educational outcome

We excluded simple forms of pupil participation such as answering questions and taking part in sport or music from the study. Our interest is the top end of Roger Hart's 'ladder of participation'[31] (which he adapted from Arnstein) that is, not just being consulted, but making decisions with or without adults sharing.

ROGER HART'S 'LADDER OF PARTICIPATION'

< DEGREES OF PARTICIPATION >

8. Youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults

7. Youth-initiated and directed

6. Adult-initiated, shared decisions with youth

5. Consulted and informed

4. Assigned but informed

< NON-PARTICIPATION >

3. Tokenism

2. Decoration

1. Manipulation

We are also not confining this to individual decision-making (as in study choices). Thus we did not include all the 'plan, do, review' type activities such as in the Highscope programme (Schweinhart et al, quoted in Flutter and Ruddock[21]). These do seem to have notable results – members of the programme group making fewer demands on the social services, for example – but it is difficult to disentangle the participatory, decision-making aspects of such programmes from all the other cognitive inputs. The study is distinctive in looking for areas where young people are taking decisions together and possibly trying to exert influence.

We are however interested in arenas or collaborative models where young people and adults work together. In a study of **'Social Capital in Action'** which looked at local connections and networks in London, Begum[4] found that young people tend to participate better in internally bonded groups (i.e. in peer groups). Avenues for participation are often through a youth advisory board or a role of trustee on the management board.

'Overall, however, there is little room for young people to express themselves politically or promote their agendas in adult-led decision-making forums. Consequently, many young people feel their voices are not heard' (Begum, p30).

Given that pupils in schools are part of 'adult-led' decisions every day, and are the key presence rather than being **'invited in'**, we would expect to find more participation there, and will be exploring whether this is so.

Research into young people's positive behaviour has been relatively rare in UK[66]. Yet there is evidence of growing involvement in community and campaigning activities (e.g. membership of Greenpeace and Amnesty). In case studies of 14-16 year olds in three schools, Roker et al[66] found that 1 in 10 were members of a group or organisation that was campaigning for something, and the majority had in the last year signed a petition, given money to charity, boycotted something and campaigned against a school rule they wanted changed. A significant proportion had helped others in school, participated in school councils, or engaged in volunteer work outside. Our interest would be in terms of what effect such involvement has.

In terms of the endpoint search, we have had to be relatively ruthless in our selection of those studies which alerted us to an *outcome*. Assessing, monitoring and evaluating participation outcomes was identified by the DfES as a challenge among the case study partnerships to date, but was recognised as important for mainstreaming participation in future[15]. While there were a wealth of case studies and examples of good practice in the literature and websites we amassed, we made a selection of those which made some causal link to another educational or social objective. We apologise in advance to those practitioners and researchers who might have hoped to see their work represented here, and can only request a dialogue so that this review becomes an interactive and continuing one.

We have not looked here at participatory opportunities and impact in youth work, as that would be a different and larger study, but concentrated mainly on participation in schools or colleges. A useful overview of the initiatives which provide opportunities for children and young people to influence decision-making at local level was provided by Willow[80], who listed 22 initiatives at that time, including Local Agenda[21], Single Regeneration Budget, Children's Fund, Sure Start, Best Value Reviews, Behaviour Support Plans, Connexions, National Healthy Schools Standard, and Education and Development Plans. Some of these are mentioned in our report, but they have not always emerged from the studies of school-based participation. We draw attention to the need for **joined-up thinking** in the commentary preceding the literature summaries.

WHO MIGHT BENEFIT FROM PARTICIPATION?

As well as deciding the focus or definition of participation, we also needed to imagine the different levels or beneficiaries of participation. Who or what is participation for? The purposes of participation identified by the then Children and Young People's Unit[10] for example were better services; promoting citizenship and social inclusion; and personal and social education and development, that is, both a personal and civic objective. The actual **drivers** of increased participation identified by the National Evaluation of the Children's Fund (2004) are fivefold:

• The consumer movement, with engagement of consumers in choice and quality;

• New Labour's **'active citizenship'** ideology;

• adoption and ratification of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

• recognition of young people as social actors with competencies;

• research and policy documents showing the important political, legal, social and moral reasons for promoting the greater integration of children and young people in their local and wider communities.

This shows a range of discourses and pressures – individual levels of choice and consumerism as well as rights, local levels of community solidarity, government ideologies of the good citizen, and international levels of adherence to conventions.

Sinclair and Franklin[71] summarise these as:

• to uphold children's rights; fulfil legal responsibilities;

• to improve services; to improve decision-making;

• to enhance democratic processes;

• to promote children's protection;

• to enhance children's skills;

• to empower and enhance self-esteem.

Those advocating participation probably do not mind where the drivers come from, as all provide entry points for pressure to open up avenues for inclusion. A question might be why, if participation meets so many social and political needs, it is not a universal activity, and why this review is necessary to provide evidence. We will therefore be identifying constraints on and challenges to participation throughout the review, summarised at the end of Chapter 2. Participation rights should be uncontestable; yet one constraint may still be a deficit view of the child.

Osler and Starkey[61] reveal how the DfES in their Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code Of Practice in 2001 cautioned about the balance between giving the child a voice and 'overburdening them with decision-making procedures where they have insufficient experience and knowledge to make appropriate judgements without additional support'.

As Osler and Starkey comment, **'the wording of the official document assumes incompetence'** and ignores how professionals may themselves need support in recognizing children's competence. Another challenge is ironically the breadth of possibilities, as DfES also recognize:

Different stakeholders (partnership board members, central team staff from partnerships, service providers, children, young people, parents and carers) have different and sometimes conflicting perspectives on the rationales for participation. This can cause a lack of clarity about what participation is and how it should be implemented' [15]

Nonetheless, there appears consensus on the need for more youth participation. The consultation to **Working Together: Giving Children and Young People a Say** found, based on 156 responses, that the vast majority were in favour of the proposals, considering them as a **'giant step forward'**. However, they asked for the government to show firm commitment to involving children and young people in discussions and consultations about what goes on in their schools and other local issues. Some pointed out there was still more to be done for Britain to catch up with its European and American counterparts. Respondents also pointed out that all should be involved – not just the articulate or popular, or those on the student council. UK students were seen to be missing out on a systematic voice through a National School Students Union, as was the case in virtually every other country in Europe, and this was seen as an important deficit. The hope would presumably be therefore that the relatively newly (re) established English Secondary Students' Association (ESSA) will not just flourish, but be taken seriously by government as part of its routine consultative procedures.

Action taken by the DfES so far has been to make the guidance on Article 12 of the UNCRC more explicit; to establish a Children's Commissioner; and to fund the UK Youth Parliament. This review aims to contribute to the debate and to enable critical dialogue on what people want and hope for from participation.

Finally, we have found that searching for literature, particularly through web-based search engines, necessitates some precision in terminology to weed out masses of material on participation in, for example, decision-making in management; but also it necessitates recognition of the other keywords which do provide useful entrance points, for example 'service learning' in USA and Canada.

CHAPTER TWO: OUTCOMES, BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF PARTICIPATION

This part of the review is structured according to different levels or types of outcome. This provides a relatively unusual form of impact evaluation. Most impact studies look at an activity and assess its outcomes. This could be seen as contrary to good educational practice, where the outcomes should be pre-specified and evaluation of success is monitored in terms of how and why it was or was not achieved. This review is therefore structured according to the tangible outcomes of various studies. We then illustrate the types of activities that might contribute to achieving the outcomes.

One of the failings of the focusing on inputs is the assumption that a single input can be said to ensure a desirable outcome – often the outcome is the result of a combination of different inputs (for example, school council PLUS headteacher support PLUS whole school policy on pupil participation). However, at the end of this chapter we do reverse the process by listing the types of input or the different approaches to participation (such as school councils or curriculum) and summarising the benefits and outcomes which have been identified as emerging from such inputs.

Positive outcomes or benefits are examined here in order of their frequency or salience. It is difficult to disentangle the results, so the distinction we make here between personal and school is somewhat arbitrary. For example, if students give teachers feedback on their performance, and this becomes incorporated into teaching practice, then this is both a school issue and a personal one for the student who might benefit from that improved classroom style, as well as gain confidence. The most one can say is that it is interactive. There is also the question of which is the more important – that the student has been consulted and feels valued, regardless of what they say, or that their views actually shift the practice of teaching.

Clearly, if consultation is tokenistic, and nothing changes as a result, then the valuation is likely to be short-lived, and may even be counter-productive.

We examine the outcomes in three **'spaces'** – personal, school/classroom and outside the school, while acknowledging their intersection.

LEARNING AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The impact of participation on learning, achievement and performance are often key concerns of schools. We found that it is difficult to make direct connections and correlations in this area, but the cumulative 'evidence' seems to be positive. One research method is to compare or track schools with different participatory organisational styles and to match these against formal examination data. In Hannam's[27] study of 12 **'more than usually participative schools'**, Ofsted comparative data had found higher than expected levels of attainment at GCSE, when the schools were viewed collectively, although there was some variation. Attendance was slightly higher than in comparable schools.

Clearly, associations or correlations do not mean causation, or causation in a particular direction: it could be that in schools that are doing well academically, it may be easier to develop – or risk - participatory structures. Nonetheless, Hallgarten et al's[26] study of pupil governorship examines evidence for links between student participation in school decision-making and school achievement, and concludes that **'school democracy and raising standards are at the very least, compatible aims'**. A similar, and in fact slightly more definite point is made in Trafford's work in his own school[77], whereby the impact of the introduction of a school council and other democratic structures and relationships was monitored closely over a five year period. Not only did greater student voice and emphasis on rights not have any harmful effects, as had been feared by parents and some staff at this academically oriented school, but standards actually went up. Trafford is able to make some direct connections between the shifting philosophy of the school and the engagement of students with all aspects of the school, including academic work.

During the research period, [the school's] A-level results rose fairly consistently, and a more detailed value-added study (between GCSE and A level) implied an even steadier rise in progress made… it would be over-ambitious to claim that the process of democratisation in this school has on its own contributed to the rise in its examination results. It is irrefutable though, that happier and more motivated students are an integral part of that improvement and that during the process of democratisation the school's results have risen at least in line with those of other similar schools – while school life has become very much more pleasant (Trafford[77]).

National comparisons on achievement matched against participation are instructive here: Finland topped worldwide attainment tables in maths, mother tongue and science and also has very high levels of pupil participation, both at the school level and at local, regional and national level through a highly effective and well-regarded national school pupils' organisation. (This point about school unions operating with government support had also been made in Davies and Kirkpatrick's[13] research on European pupil democracy which examined the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany and Sweden). Norway was also establishing **'causal pathways'** between variables such as democratic participation, pupil well-being and learning in mathematics, science and mother tongue.

When establishing such pathways, there are a number of complexities or possibilities. One initial distinction that needs to be made is that between participation in decisions about learning for oneself as a student and participation in decisions about pedagogy and curriculum for the school or year group as a whole. Another point of analysis is whether a generally participatory school will somehow provide an atmosphere which aids learning and achievement. The National Healthy Schools Standard report[52] for example examined the links between pupil participation and school improvement, and found that **'no strong evidence emerged to suggest that greater pupil participation was linked with increased school attainment scores'**. However, the qualitative evidence suggested that teachers perceived positive spin-offs from greater participation, including a happier and more creative learning environment and **'more focussed children who settled into lessons more happily'.**

As Hudson[38] points out, 'while the implementation of citizenship practices are unlikely, in the short term, to impact directly upon academic results, they may contribute towards the longer-term transformation of schools'.

STUDENTS HAPPIER AND MORE IN CONTROL

Some of the impact thus seems to be indirect, in that there are reports of students being happier and better behaved if they participate in decisions about learning and that this leads to higher achievement; sometimes it is more direct, in that children feel more in control of their learning if they feel they are making real decisions about it (e.g. Beveridge[6]). Wehmeyer[79] claimed in USA from studies of student involvement in education planning and decision-making that those who were so involved performed better than their peers who were not involved. This **'involvement'** seemed to be linked to individual choosing of activities and personal goal setting, and therefore to self-determination and motivation rather than to whole-school decisions relating to how learning is conceptualised and structured. Involving students in decisions about their own learning paths seems a very obvious step; yet it is ironic in England that children and young people with SEN or in public care are likely to be more accustomed to taking part in decisions that affect their education, as statutory procedures require their input. The Code of Practice for SEN emphasises the importance of involving children and young people in individual decisions about their education. It will be interesting to see how far the rhetoric of 'choice' percolates down to individual students in mainstream schools, beyond the usual choosing of options and modules. Currently, students may not have much practice in making decisions, and increased participation would help in this.

One study reported a pastoral teacher realising that children had not had much responsibility for making decisions, and found it difficult to make choices of career. Therefore they needed practice in making decisions, as they did not, for example, see whether or not to do homework as an example of a decision to make about staying in education. 'Our kids make decisions and they change their mind. For example, the options. They can't remember'. The school council was therefore for him a key site for this practice, in at least two ways: with each class discussing the agenda; and in the practice of the election for representatives, particularly in learning to live with the consequences of decisions and choices made (Davies[11]).

GIVING AND GETTING FEEDBACK ON LEARNING

The studies on pupil consultation provide some insights here, and demonstrate a growing movement and research base. Flutter and Ruddock[21] report that if students are consulted about teaching and learning, they understand the learning processes more, they see learning as a serious matter and their metacognition or higher order thinking skills are developed. They acquire a technical language for talking about learning. (Critical thinking as an outcome is similarly mentioned in a number of studies, including the Flemish Ministry of Education[20]).

Consultation on teaching and learning takes a variety of forms – questionnaires or focus groups of students on aspects related to learning (homework policy, study support, Records of Achievement, the option system); feedback to individual teachers on their lessons; representation of students on committees related to learning or to specific subjects. The European research of Davies and Kirkpatrick[13] reported students (and parents) being involved in different subject committees at secondary schools in Germany, advising on content, method and assessment. Legislation in the Netherlands said students in each class had to be consulted about the curriculum before the start of each academic year. Dobie and Gee[17] report in UK that some schools would research achievement by asking the students what they thought influenced such achievement.

COMMUNICATION

Another link that is made in the literature is between talk and achievement: school councils for example are seen to provide important learning outcomes, the most important being skills in communication, especially speaking and discussion, and taking responsibility[74].

A community school: members regarded being on the council as a good experience by saying "we learn a lot of people skills… it teaches you how to talk things out." The Principal said that many student council members performed better in terms of their academic results because it helped them realise their potential (White[45]).

Mitra[57] talks of participation increasing competence, and we know from all the studies of multiple intelligences[22] that these can be seen and even evaluated singly (for example a person could be high on emotional intelligence and low on logical-mathematical intelligence), but that full potential would consist of marshalling all the intelligences together. Participatory practices seem to provide opportunities for competence that conventional classroom styles do not reach.

SPECIFIC CURRICULUM AND KNOWLEDGE AREAS

Participation can benefit specific areas of the curriculum such as citizenship through providing practical opportunities for pupils to act on ideas taught in lessons[21]. The converse also applies, that in the International Study of Educational Achievement (IEA) study, teachers thought that citizenship education would help increase participation in school council or community activities[46]. Niemi et al[59] report that involvement in school-based community activities and less formal, volunteer community service appears to stimulate greater political knowledge and higher political efficacy. In USA and Canada, there is the notion and practice of service learning which in UK is more often referred to as community work or community service. Gibson[24] examined the impact of participation in service learning on high school students and found that they did increase civic knowledge, skills and dispositions, but that civic engagement would not be maximally increased unless certain practices or activities were in place (such as students choosing their own activity in the community). Students were reported to have higher enjoyment of school as well as being more likely to vote.

There appears to be a spin-off to other subjects on the curriculum too. Hudson[38] comments how:

'by 2003, at the end of the research cycle, some teachers noted how the citizenship curriculum itself contributed to students' understanding of topics within their subjects. They commented on the pertinence of understanding democracy and being able to distinguish fact from opinion'.

Schools that model democratic values and practices, and encourage students to discuss issues in the classroom and take an active role in the life of the school are claimed to be the most effective in promoting civic knowledge and engagement[23]. In this way, knowledge about being a citizen is linked to actual citizen behaviour.

IMPACT OF EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Some of the research looks at the impact on achievement of pupil participation in activities outside the formal curriculum. The research is mixed here. It is significant that simple participation in extra-curricular activities does not necessarily improve grades nor educational expectations[39]. Rather, getting better grades may lead to students participating in more extracurricular activities. However, a review of studies by Locke et al[59] found that

participation in activities such as community service and volunteering is associated with improved school performance.

Jordan and Nettles[43] found that service learning in USA, in terms of participation in structured activities and religious activities outside school, had positive and significant effects on various educational (i.e. academic) outcomes by Grade 12. (Conversely, time spent hanging out with peers was negatively associated; working for pay and time spent alone was inconsistent). The message seems to be to provide opportunities for structured time outside school, particularly spending time with adults. However a study by Kane[44] of after school programmes provided by public-private partnerships found no statistically significant impact on achievement test scores of one year of participation. Nonetheless the programmes promoted greater student engagement and greater student commitment to homework, which in the long term might impact on achievement. Much would depend of course on the nature of the programmes, and how really participatory they were in the terms of this study.

A meta review by Simpkins[70] of participation in out-of-school time activities concludes that 'participation matters for academic success' (while other studies do not find this). This may be indirect, in that the activities are seen as beneficial as they **'situate youth in safe environments'**, prevent them from engaging in delinquent activities, teach them specific skills and behaviours and provide opportunities for youth to develop relationships with peers and mentors. (It is interesting that normal school does not appear to provide this opportunity). Here the link seems to be very much in terms of behavioural norms and control, socialising youth into appropriate orientations which will have spin-offs for academic achievement.

Interestingly, Cleaver et al[9] reporting on the IEA study found that some students would take an instrumental view of participation, for example in voluntary activities – that it would help in university entrance or to get a better job. It would not be clear from the study whether this was more a question of it **'**looking good on the application form**'**, and having something to talk about at interview, or related to the increased social skills and confidence issues – presumably both.

PERSONAL OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS
SELF ESTEEM

Often in parallel with academic achievement, self esteem and confidence were mentioned many times.

Fielding[18] concludes from effective schools research that there can be substantial gains in effectiveness when the self-esteem of pupils is raised and when they are given a share of responsibility for their own learning.

Hannam[27] reports from the student participation aspects of the government **'citizenship order'** that heads and managers saw a beneficial impact of participation on self-esteem, motivation, ownership and empowerment, and that this enhances attainment. He talks of a **'benign circle'** whereby participative activities require students to take initiatives and decisions which generates motivation, ownership and feeling of being trusted and independent, which supports skills learning and a sense of efficacy. This emphasis on confidence and responsibility is reported internationally, for example in Tanzania which has a tradition of school councils linked to the national ideologies of self-reliance and socialism[29]. It is also reported in evaluations of Children's Fund projects (e.g Holmes and Manby[35]) which take place outside and within the school.

An increase in self-esteem is particularly true for council representatives[17]. The confidence grew from feeling able to influence policy inside and outside the school; from skills in participating in meetings; knowing how to represent others; and how to work as a team. (This latter is interesting, in that it implies that in spite of years of being together in cohorts of 30 students, there is little opportunity to learn how to work as a team, and that individual or isolated work is more the norm). When students are consulted about learning and teaching, their self-confidence grows[21].

Children with special needs especially benefit from an emphasis on being **'active participants in learning'**[41] – the argument is that they have greater self-belief and engagement in learning; that if they are part of a **'learning community'**, they will eventually be able to **'participate as members of an inclusive society'**. Gold and Gold[25] in talking of school councils also report that self-esteem can be enhanced for students with special needs or moderate learning difficulties who would otherwise have problems of confidence. Simon and Stone[69] similarly reported that school councils in special schools led to increased self-confidence, improved relationships with staff, whereby **'pupils were more likely to ask questions and ask for help if they were having trouble understanding in class. This led to an improvement in learning'**

'Because I can't hear properly I can now ask people to slow down and speak slowly' (Young woman aged 20 with Downs syndrome, reported in Blake and Frances[7], National Healthy Schools Standard)

INTERPERSONAL AND POLITICAL SKILLS

Many studies talk of various sorts of skills which are developed through participation activities – often in the community. Jordan and Nettles[43] provide evidence that the service learning that takes place within community organisations can contribute to adolescents' development of interpersonal skills, help them better navigate formal organisations (such as schools) and foster a desire for public service and personal satisfaction in life. Volunteering is cited as helping in social skills and personal development, as well as development of civic attitudes[51]. It is associated with reduced risk behaviours (e.g. teenage pregnancies, drug use). Examples are cited often of the individual pupil who was a trouble-maker but then when elected onto a council, or taking part in a community project, found more constructive avenues to direct energy. Conversely, the shy child can be brought out through participatory activities, implying a possible three way link between talk, self-esteem and achievement.

Children participating in recruitment of staff for a large Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisation… writing newsletters, and interviewing 'important people' felt that they had gained confidence as a result of their participation. A young person commented … this has given me confidence… because I used to be quite shy and now I don't mind talking in public and being the editor. I used to like think I would rather sit in a corner and read a book but now I would rather shout out and talk to people and stuff because of doing the interviews and stuff has made me want to talk more… (DfES[15])

Miller[56] argues that participation enables children to learn to express and understand their own needs; only when they can do that can they consider the feelings and needs of others. Developing the skills of communication, debate, negotiation and compromise can help achieve a balance between their own needs and those of others.

AN APPRENTICESHIP IN DEMOCRACY

Learning about formal meetings and how they work is an important skill which cannot be taught in the abstract. Student councils are seen to give direct experience of the processes of democracy – and to constitute an **'apprenticeship in democracy'**[5]. In Taylor and Johnson's[74] study, councillors described how they had developed democratic skills (listening, speaking, negotiating, teamwork, taking responsibility), and had begun to gain a grounding in democratic processes, especially learning how to ask others' views, be a representative, argue a point of view and take different things into account in decision-making. Non-councillors were less likely to benefit, but in her study they often had positive views of its achievements. In Fielding and Prieto's[19] study of action research, the students **'lived the experience of learning how to manage their emotions'**. This was through the conduct of arguments, learning how to listen, how not to dismiss others as stupid or worthless, not feel personally attached when someone has a different opinion – **'these were all important aspects of learning how to live with others, and, more specifically, learning how to be prepared for life in a democratic society'**. This was of course helped by the fact that the research was on democracy itself:

**As student researchers, we want this project to be successful and feel proud, because with our work, opinions and commitment we will be able to revalue democracy and thus we will grow as people.
(Fielding and Prieto[19])**

Democratic skills and democratic attitudes are related. John and Osborne[42] conducted one of the few studies to empirically compare democratic and less democratic schools; they found that there were significantly stronger democratic attitudes in the students from the democratic school, (a school that had more freedom of expression in the classroom), and that students were more ardent supporters of race and gender equality. Interestingly, the students were more sceptical however about whether the government actually operated democratically.

Peer education, networking and **social capital** could also be seen as part of a democratic civil society. McMahon and Herman[54] report that students who took part in a peer education sexual assault prevention programme consistently perceived themselves as creating positive change in their peers, and that they developed skills to deal with incidents of sexual and interpersonal violence. Another interesting outcome was the **'identification of peers within the community as advocates and resources'**. There was evidence that participants became more critical of influences that present sexual abuse as acceptable, for example, TV. The programme centred round an **'innovative improvisational theatre programme'**, and other studies mention drama as being a good entry point for tackling controversial issues and generating the impetus to create change. There is a big debate otherwise about whether participation in the arts has benefits for society. Merli[55] critiques previous studies used by the Arts Council of Great Britain, that participation in the arts **'can promote tolerance and contribute to conflict resolution'** or **'can provide a route to rehabilitation and integration for offenders'** or **'can encourage people to accept risk positively'**. His critique is on methodological grounds, of the use of questionnaires, the design of statements, of sampling, of not examining projects that failed, of not looking at longitudinal effects etc. We endorse such critiques and difficulties of social impact studies in Chapter 3.

A SENSE OF AGENCY AND EFFICACY

Finally within this section we come to the important question of agency and feeling more effective in different areas of one's life. This is mentioned often in descriptions of student research. Fielding has documented the impact of students engaging in action research in a range of contexts, including Chile[18,19]. The Chilean students who were involved in a collaborative action research project on democracy itself developed skills and confidence, but also **'the realisation that they had the primary responsibility for their development processes'**. A spin-off was the successful staging of a strike about decisions on the organisation of a school day, which the head refused to let them take responsibility for. **'The teachers gave them silent support, as none of them tried or insisted on taking them into the classrooms'**. From this and other examples, the researchers report that the students **'created a flow of events that we had not anticipated at all'**. Thomson and Holdsworth[75] similarly recount that being involved in research and policy gave students a sense of direction. Soleimanpour[72] reports on participation in youth-led research, in this case health research, finding that students reported increased self-efficacy, improved interpersonal skills, increased knowledge of health and of research concepts, greater confidence about future employment and careers and increased desire for further education. All this is the **'agency'** that Mitra[57] mentions as a result of student voice, and the **'politicised identity'** which Hudson[38] uses as a framework in examining the results of students engaging in action research in the community. Action research may of course lead to beneficial outcomes other than for the participants, but this is more difficult to measure or evaluate: it is significant that the Birmingham Youth Engagement in Action Research on Decision-making project (B:YEARD www.bayc.org) found that identifying **'product outcomes'** rather than **'process outcomes'** raised unrealistic expectations. In terms of process however, the project found that the combination of action research and youth work approaches created opportunities for learning, supported innovative ways of working, shared valuable resources and delivered community recognition[3].

OUTCOMES FOR SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM

We had originally thought to talk separately of outcomes at school and classroom level, but found that they really are inextricably interwoven. Many studies talk of school **'ethos'** and **'ownership'** and **'belonging'** by students[14, 17, 20, 57]. These are abstract terms, and it was important to try to find what this meant. One aspect might be listening – that pupils felt that their concerns were listened to[17]. **'Voice'** appears as a theme throughout many studies, variously described as communication or dialogue. It appears that it is not just the communicating, but overcoming the **'us'** and **'them'** alienation[18, 25]; all are on the same side. A similar concept was an atmosphere of trust[48] which Lee sees as an aspect of social capital.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TEACHERS AND PUPILS

Classroom relationships are seen to improve as part of this trust. **As always in this report, we are never sure if good teacher-student relationships are an input or outcome of participation, but they clearly interact.** Consultation about learning and teaching leads to greater collaboration[21]. Citizenship activities were found to lead to better teacher-student relationships[27, 38]. Swain[73] reported on a democratic vocational special school, which started to involve adolescents in large areas of decision-making, and found teacher-student relationships of **'exceptional quality and strength'**. Some students became regular attenders after long periods of removing themselves from the system, finding meaning and enjoyment in education. The inputs here were summarised under the heading of **'fraternity'** – with no staff room, shared toilets, first name terms, and frequent use of humour. Behavioural norms were those needed in the workplace. This was reminiscent of the school in Davies'[11] study which did not have a school council but instead created a highly equitable and adult environment by having no staff room, no teachers' desks and no playground, and shared areas for recreation, work and leisure.

This brings us on to the debate about whether school councils are central to the process of the school ethos and more equitable relationships or whether they should be seen as but one of a necessary wider repertoire of participation processes. It is worth focussing on councils at this point, as they were certainly seen to be promoting a **'positive school atmosphere and creating a caring school environment which is supportive and inclusive'**[45]. If we break down this positive school atmosphere, it can be students who **'stand up for the school in a nice, pleasant way'**. Effective student councils are seen as invaluable in the solution of school problems[65]. This is not confined to mainstream schools, but improvement in relationships with staff is reported also for special schools with school councils[69].

The Principal commented "one of the greatest benefits for me as Principal of having such an active student council is the shift in relationship between staff and students. The staff treat the student council more as equals, there's a mutual respect there…" (Keogh and Whyte[45]).

Rowe[67] too argues that **'there is virtually no part of school life which school councils do not have the potential to improve'** (although he warns that school councils may produce a cohort of young people convinced that democracy is tokenistic and a sham). Taylor and Johnson's summary[74] of the role of school councils in citizenship and Personal and Social Education, found teachers considering the main benefits as having an established forum for pupil views, and **'allowing'** students to contribute to the running of the school. This notion of **'allowing'** perhaps provides a clue as to their power or otherwise: school councils are visible and, if necessary, controllable. Power can always be taken away, if students do not stand up for the school in a **'nice pleasant way'**, in Robinson's words. Trafford is excellent in his books[76, 77] on the dilemmas of power-sharing and how to balance competing demands from teachers, parents and students. In the end, is uniform negotiable? Is it worth going to the wall for?

Other forms of participation are less bounded and can be more unpredictable. As with the student strike mentioned in Fielding and Prieto's[19] work, an example from a current project on school councils in which the University of Birmingham team are involved, found a council member fresh from training who decided to mount a petition about an unresolved problem in the school. This almost jeopardised the project, although it was not directly a council decision to take this action.

However councils certainly provide an immediate forum and site for consultation processes in the school, involvement in decisions, and encourage ownership. Overall, relationships between teachers and pupils, and between pupils and pupils, are said to be enhanced when council work gives greater status to pupils and enables a dignified, adult learning atmosphere.

IMPROVING TEACHERS' PRACTICE

Here we see the influence of pupil participation on teachers' decisions – the work on consultation[21] claims that giving feedback to teachers will improve aspects of their practice, that is, that while pupils are not actually making decisions themselves, they become involved in the teachers' own decision-making processes, and can see the results.

I went to a meeting where we talked about the science curriculum and we were asked what was good and what could make it better for future years. I think this is a really good idea (Young man aged 15, National Healthy Schools Standard[7]).

Hannam's[27] study of the involvement of young people in identifying ways of gathering their views on curriculum found that in their schools, students were able to take problems of curriculum through known routes in their school. Pupils involved in researching their teachers and the interactions in the classrooms also provide all sorts of data which feed into teaching styles and effectiveness:

Another interesting idea that emerged through these discussions was how pupils often took the lead from subtle signals from teachers about the nature of learning activities such as completing worksheets and homework assignments. If the teacher appeared more 'serious' about a particular task, then pupils tended to respond to this 'signal' by judging that the task must be important and so concentrated more thoroughly on it (Flutter and Ruddock[21],p30).

While teachers can take some while to get used to students acting as peer observers, it is seen as one way to break down the isolation of the classroom and have a different lens on the daily work of teaching.

IMPROVEMENT OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The research also highlights the effects of participation on school governance and infrastructure. Throughout the studies were examples of pupils being consulted about the school development plan; building design; the school day; as well as the curriculum mentioned above. Some studies reported students being directly involved in School Development Planning and in departmental reviews[17, 21, 32, 68]. There is the assumption – and agreement - that the actual decisions made in these areas are better, so that student consultation has combined benefits: improved decisions, improved school facilities and improved ethos. Bell[5] reports a **'safer school environment'**. Keogh and Whyte[45] write of how the council improved the school facilities and made the school a more pleasant environment, also improving the quality of communication. Throughout the studies, particularly those on school councils, there is obviously quite a lot on impact on the school environment – playground, lockers, safety, breakfast clubs, negotiating with the contractors about refurbishment of the toilets – that is, not just complaining about the toilets, but being part of the process of change.

Increasingly, pupils (whether in or outside the council) are being involved in staff recruitment interviews[11, 13, 21]. Again, this has the dual benefits of better appointments being made and pupils feeling a sense of belonging, that they are trusted and that their views are respected. In the European research, Davies and Kirkpatrick[13] noted in the Netherlands students also being involved in the decision on whether probationary teachers should be retained in a school. A student working group devised questionnaires for other students on the teachers' performance in the classroom, collated results on the computer and presented their findings to the committee. Their views counted as one-third in the final decision.

All these areas relate to the consensus that better decisions are made as a result of student participation and voice. There is firstly the visibility and awareness by school personnel of student concerns. **A survey of 26 schools in Stirling[17] reported that headteachers were more aware of student concerns; that they could address these before they escalated, and that they could make more informed decisions. As Fielding commented, 'Schools are too complex to be run by one person at the top of a simple chain of command'.** Miller[55] argues that insights gain from children can help adults to work more effectively. In the report on pupil involvement in Stirling schools, headteachers said they became more aware of pupils' ability to contribute; they had to accept that sometimes students know best[17].

One headteacher admitted that he had been persuaded to install lockers against his better judgment. He also admitted that "I was proved wrong – they have been an unqualified success" (Dobie and Gee[17]).

Many studies mention involvement of pupils in various aspects of school policy – usually rewards, bullying and behaviour (e.g. Scottish Schools Ethos). One study reported in Flutter and Ruddock[21] was of pupils involved in the policy of target setting – they found a need for a school-wide approach, giving a more active role to Year 10 and 11 in deciding their targets, and offering clearer guidance on how to achieve them. The key finding from the pupil data was that pupils felt they needed to know how to improve their work as well as what required improvement.

The meeting I have with the school council is the most useful and informative meeting that I have with anyone. The dialogue that I have with the children in school council and other situations are, in my opinion, a major force for school improvement. All the children from the nursery to Year 6 know what is good about the school, what needs improvement and have excellent ideas about how this improvement should be achieved. (Headteacher quoted in Blake and Frances[7]).

BEHAVIOUR

After (or together with) learning and achievement, a key concern for schools is behaviour and discipline (nearly always of students). A perhaps significant definition of discipline is that made by Bell[5], as **'learning to care for others and engage in service to the community'**. Caring is a recurring theme (e.g. in Gold and Gold[25]) – not just caring for other students, but mutual understanding between staff and students of each others' problems and concerns. While time is needed for participation activities, Gold and Gold said that in the end, school councils can free precious spare time of teachers from the time-consuming role of disciplinarian. Discipline is similarly mentioned by Inman and Burke[40] as part of the work of school councils, in contributing to good relations, promoting social inclusion and giving expression to children's rights. This can be through the development of an agreed discipline and welfare policy[75]; or through the council directly disciplining errant children[11]. There is reported to be a decline in vandalism and truancy.

Alternatively, the better behaviour of male teenagers can be achieved through drama in terms of participation in a community play, where boys shared ownership of the content. (Horitz[37]).

Those schools involved in **mini-enterprise** work also report improvements in behaviour, where students learn teamwork and organisational skills, as well as seeing concrete results from their labours. Again, there is the shift to more adult ways of operating, as students accept responsibility and see it as a direct preparation for work[68].

School rules are mentioned as a top item in Baginsky and Hannam's[2] study of the views of students and teachers on school councils. Rules devised by the council are more sensible, and this was the most positive aspect of the council. Many studies quote Harber[30], that **'rules are better kept by staff and students if democratically agreed to in the first place'**.

Within the whole notion of discipline is a very contemporary and ongoing concern with bullying, and participation is seen in various ways to help tackle this. Keogh and Whyte[45] (and others) report an improvement in bullying in some schools. Bullying is often cited in research as one of the key factors in exclusion and lack of achievement. Both Bell[5] and Davies[19] indicate that school councils can help in reducing exclusions, through work on bullying strategy. **Research shows also that participation in peer support activities builds on children's natural desire to help each other and that schools with peer support programmes have witnessed a significant reduction in bullying[7]**. The participation here seems to work in a number of ways: advising on bullying policies and strategies (such as bully boxes and other ways for pupils to lodge their distress and concerns); being part of peer support schemes, such as **buddy systems** and mentoring; and specific training in mediation.

'It's as if you are putting the kindness back in' (Boy aged 9 explaining his peer mediation work, quoted in Blake and Frances[7]).

Behaviour is linked with democracy in a number of studies, and advocates of democratic schooling will see that care is part of the democratic ethos. This relates to the micropolitics of the school, in that studies report a better understanding of or adherence to a democratic system, or representativeness. Students learned the vocabulary of democratic decision-making and of curriculum organisation, and – importantly - were aware that teachers were under constraint[28]. Greater empathy for teachers resulting from community and citizenship activities was also reported in Hudson's[38] study, where a Year 10 girl for example reported that she had become more **'mature'**. **'And I understand where teachers are coming from'**.

A girls' secondary school: "They learn that they must compromise and that there is a process through which decisions must be made… The election process gives the students experience of voting. The liaison teacher said that "it's a fantastic introduction to democracy for them… Members of the student body also learn responsibility… The council members have learned how to lobby." (Keogh and Whyte[45]).

Democratic skills were mentioned in the previous section, but at this point this also relates to the question of democratic responsibility in a whole community. Miller[56] argues that promoting participatory practice encourages democratic procedures and respect for the principles and practice of democratic life. It is assumed that this applies also to teachers: many of the studies reviewed talk only of the students, and the point of truly democratic and participatory ethos in the school is that the democratic rules apply to teachers as well.

OUTCOMES OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

This section is far shorter than the others, reflecting the concerns of the studies used, and the fact that any impact of activities by school-age students is understandably far more often at a personal level and within the school than it is outside. However, there are some interesting features, which we classify under the headings of outcomes at levels of community, family, national and international.

OUTCOMES FOR THE COMMUNITY

It was significant that in Hudson's[38] school where students were involved in community projects as part of their citizenship courses, the students talked of the partnerships they experienced. In their written responses to the question of whether everyone can 'make a difference', 74 out of the 136 students who responded mentioned the word 'community' in their answers. The studies overall do reveal a wealth of ways in which students are not only involved in their communities, but feel they can do something there. Many of the mentions of the community concerned student involvement in local councils. In Stirling, students are represented on the Stirling Council Children's Committee and participate in the Area Forum, responding to policy initiatives on issues such as substance abuse and child protection, as well as working with community architects on the design of a shopping centre. Primary pupils were reported as increasingly putting forward issues at Area Forum meetings, such as the provision of out of school play areas, or drawing attention to an underpass that flooded on rainy days. Again, in Hudson's school, representatives engaged in the local 'Council of Champions' which was a democratic forum set up to parallel the borough's official council. **One Year 7 boy related how he felt he could make a difference by putting his and others' views across 'like issues to do with education and safety and housing issues… I actually feel encouraged to do more things for the community… I've learned like how to go into the world to make a stand for myself'. Here the personal and the community impact become indivisible.**

The Association for Citizenship Teaching case studies[1] also report partnership meetings with local councils, resulting in clear specific outcomes, such as better litter bins, tree planting, anti-vandalism campaigns and a skate park. Thomson and Holdsworth[75] mention outcomes in Australia such as the improvement of a track near a school where a young woman had been murdered, as a result of participation in road safety campaigns. As with school participation, the benefits of such community participation would then be mutual: students gain in confidence and skill, and local council decisions would be at least informed by a young person's input.

'The difficulty of accessing the Children's Committee policy papers was taken up by the student forum who recommended that leaflets highlighting key issues would gain a better response. Leaflets were then produced for a draft policy on Looked After Children'
(Dobie and Gee[17])

Carroll et al[8] report on a school-based, youth-driven, violence prevention programme, where students met at lunchtime to plan health-related activities and novel community participation strategies to prevent violence. This also changed the students' understanding of violence. Similarly, Holden's[34] study of young people participating in a local tobacco control group found that participating in the health action groups gave the students skills of assertiveness, advocacy, perceived socio-political control and knowledge of relevant resources. One assumes that change was also affected in their communities, as well as these internal benefits. Hudson[38] found that the citizenship programme appeared to have encouraged students to consider partnerships with agencies which they may previously have mistrusted, such as the police. Many students commented that they felt they could make a difference to crime, by communicating with the police or engaging with strategies about issues such as mobile phone theft.

A few weeks ago we did make some kind of difference by presenting our research and findings about mobile phone theft to the local MP. The way we made this difference was by bringing up important issues which everyone knew about to present to people in power who can make that change which we desire… many people agreeing means power and power means making change (Joshua, Year 11 boy, in Hudson[38]).

One of the few empirical follow up studies was of the perceived influence of 8 week community service placements (Summer Work And Service Programme, or SWASP) on participants' continuing involvement in the voluntary sector[51].

Participants reported that SWASP had helped them develop an interest in community activities and that they intended to volunteer in the future. (This matches previous studies on links between volunteering at school and afterwards[81]).**'It was possible to cultivate among young people a climate of volunteerism, civic engagement and awareness of the non-profit sector as a potential employer' (Locke et al[51]). This was seen as then providing a broader benefit for the voluntary sector itself in improving human resources in terms of volunteers, employers and leaders.**

The Citizenship Foundation has piloted the Youth Act! project www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk, which aims to encourage active citizenship and impact on the local community, produced an evaluation of the pilot, where independent consultants reported that the pilot had a marked effect on confidence and motivation, and had enabled them to engage in social and political action in their communities. It was a scheme **'which warranted attention and resources'**. Activities had included improving facilities for young people on an estate, tackling mobile phone theft, developing the anti-bullying work of the school, reducing gun crime by incorporating it into the school's citizenship curriculum and young people running assemblies and sessions to raise awareness. The mobile phone theft campaign was chosen as an example of best practice by the Council of Europe.

'It has meant to me that small people do have powers and sometimes grown-ups don't realise but we small people do! (Zak , aged 14, www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk).

Hence insights gained from children help adults to work more effectively and to ensure that services provided are relevant to children's needs[56]. The report on the DfES initiative Children, Young People and Families Directorate[47] which supports those wanting to involve children in decision-making, found outcomes in four areas: improved service development, improved client support, increased access and use of services and increased participatory practice. As well as improving service development, it also increased young people's sense of citizenship and social inclusion, which has direct benefits for community.

OUTCOMES FOR THE FAMILY

Three studies mentioned impact on the home-school relationship and relations with parents. Beveridge[6] discussed children with and without Special Educational Needs who were involved in decisions at home and school, as well as in policy on home-school relations themselves, and found families having a better understanding of the school when this happened. There is nonetheless the question of whether all students want closer home school relations or communications, and whether they prefer to keep these lives separate.

In Gibson's study[24] of participation in service learning in USA, parents of the children involved were more likely to participate in school life (although while students are taking part, they are not at home with their parents, and for some this is seen as not desirable). Niemi et al[59] mentioned how participation in community activities and volunteering stimulated more political discussions with parents.

OUTCOMES FOR THE NATION OR COUNTRY

In Hannam's study[28] of schools with a commitment to student voice, he found that students were much more confident in expressing their views about a range of topics including government policy, than students in schools where there were little opportunities for student voice. The question then arises of whether there are opportunities to let the government know. Much depends on the national structures of consultation, as mentioned earlier. The European study of pupil democracy by Davies and Kirkpatrick[13] noted far more opportunities in European countries than in the UK at that time, with the school students unions being routinely consulted on education policy, having offices in the Ministry of Education and therefore being part of meetings or having a complex system of representation from school to local to regional to national forums. This meant there were mechanisms for voices to be heard. Thomson and Holdsworth[75] similarly talk of leadership forums in Australia, such as the Student Environment Council formed to advise the Minister. The instance was given of students proposing and arguing convincingly for a coastal marine park to serve as a whale sanctuary.

The other question at the national level is whether participation during the school years will influence future behaviour, such as voting habits or in other ways being an active citizenship. This requires predictions and extrapolations as well as longitudinal studies. Haste's[32] study found that those students who said they were more likely to be involved in various forms of civic engagement were more likely to have helped people in their local community through activities organised by their school or college. Students who said they were likely to vote (43%) had taken part in various participation activities over the last two years.

Similarly, in the IEA study, respondents perceived that participation at school may influence the willingness of young people to participate in political activities as adults[46]. This was because a sense of 'school efficacy' (improving things at school) was investigated as a factor in the study, and is seen as a factor in future political efficacy. However, the evidence for this relationship was tentative – the authors warn that although a large percentage of 14 year olds stated an intention to vote, this is not a particularly good predictor of actual voting behaviour.

Reviews such as that by Miller[56] will claim that young children 'who are experienced participators are likely to go on to become capable and involved citizens, thus benefiting society as a whole'.

This can however be backed up by some other research: Verba, Schlozman and Brady[78] studied factors that determined US contemporary adults' participation in democratic processes such as voting, working in political campaigns and joining social movements. The most potent predictor of adult participation was involvement in student government during high school. An identical finding was made by Hanks and Eckland in 1978, who cited extracurricular activities and school government as the clearest predictor of positive political engagement aged 30 (quoted in Yates and Youniss[81]).

GLOBAL OUTCOMES

Here, the immediate impact would mostly be in terms of fund-raising – that young people worked to raise funds for international organisations and charities[1, 16]. Young people's charity work is mentioned in many studies, and is seen as a way of involving large numbers of participants in the school. The decision-making here would be within the school, in involving events and the mobilisation of the school and community, rather than influencing any wider decisions.

Some activities derive from students' explorations of issues such as the global environment or fair trade. In Hudson's[38] school, for example, students were making posters about ethical consumption and writing letters to the director of Nike about workers' conditions and pay. One cannot claim this as an outcome, but at least it is a connection. The young people involved in the Young People's Commission for Africa did make recommendations and tried to influence politicians, but it is not known how influential they were. Students conducted independent research, exchanged information, questioned politicians and celebrities, and made their views known. Their feedback inevitably mentioned more personal benefits – awareness, critical thinking, empathy for others – as it would be impossible to disentangle particular impacts on the final decisions.

However, the fact that the further one gets from the school the more difficult it is to evaluate impact does not mean that this activity is not highly important. Students in a study of the needs of teachers and learners in global citizenship[12] mentioned participating in the demonstrations and marches against the Iraq war. There was an interesting difference in response from schools, from those where teachers went along too, to those where students were punished for attending. If the research on the long-term effects of pupil activism is correct, then it would seem important that schools not just permit pupils to attend, but actively model citizen activism.

ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS IN PARTICIPATION

In this section, we summarise in list form the types of challenges to student participation which have emerged from the various studies which we examined. Like everything else, these interact, with spirals of problems emerging.

1. The need for whole school structures or activities

Many studies will point to the need for school councils to be embedded in wider sets of orientations and practices. There is a view that councils are necessary but not sufficient, or even that formal structures of student-only councils can be counterproductive, creating an adversarial **'us'** and **'them'** atmosphere.

- Certainly there is agreement that as many students should be involved as possible, and that it is crucial to think of entry points to participation that potentially involve all students directly (through curriculum, community work etc).

- There is an ongoing problem relating to the entitlement of all pupils: Ofsted[60] has criticised schools for only offering opportunities for participation.

- Whatever the structures of activities are, a good communications network is needed to raise issues, give feedback, sample student opinion, celebrate success etc. Feedback to peers, teachers and governors can be a weak link in the information and consultative process.

- There can be a lack of awareness of the student council by Boards of Management and even by the staff.

2. The scope and limits of pupil participation

- Some participation is seen as **'tokenism'**, for example where the drawing up of class rules was decided by the teacher not the students.

- Pupils raise issues or suggest initiatives that are then not taken forward, or are disregarded in favour of what teachers want.

- There can be pupil disillusionment about the pace of change and keeping the momentum going.

- In at least one study, the scope of school council work was limited. School councils were reported as having no organisation, were sometimes overly bureaucratic or lacked effective leadership.

- Students were seen as not able to take the wider picture than their immediate concerns.

- Even in a democratic school dissent was suppressed, there was a limitation on dialogue and critique, and there was passivity rather than truly participatory democracy.

- A budget is needed for participation work, whether in councils or outside, and there can be reluctance to delegate any more than token sums.

3. Time and opportunity cost

- High levels of student participation are seen to put additional pressures on pupils.

- One study reported that some see pupil participation as a distraction from the core business of a school (teaching, learning and gaining qualifications).

- It is not realistic to expect large impact of activities such as service learning on academic achievement, given the large proportion of time devoted comparatively to academic work.

- A wide range of staff commitment is needed, and this is not just for staff involved in council work. Pressure on staff time is therefore often cited.

- There is pressure on the timetable, and time and place of school council meetings comes up frequently: this is a particular problem in rural schools because of fixed transport times.

4. Existing attitudes and values in the school

- The structure of student voice efforts and the nature of adult-student relations fundamentally influence the forms of youth development outcomes that emerge. Staff can be more concerned about responsibilities than rights of students, and a discourse of rights and political literacy is not always popular in the school.

- Opportunities can be lost because of **'traditional hierarchies and authoritarian values'** in the school. Pupil power is seen to undermine teacher authority even further.

- Staff will say that it is important for students to be involved in certain areas (in raising achievement, homework policy, PSE programme) but do not actually involve them.

- Staff do not feel it is important to involve students in appointments of teachers or managing a devolved budget.

- Teachers feel threatened by students researching or being consulted on their practice. Contentious issues are highlighted, and this may lead to hostility in the staffroom.

- There is the need for the support and vision of headteacher and management; vision has to be collectively developed and consistently documented.

- Staff need more training and development on student councils. There is a need for case study examples to educate the whole school about what a student council is and can do. Otherwise impact may be confined to a particular teacher with enthusiasm or skill, and there is a need for values of participation and their resulting systems to be embedded in the school.

5. Nature of consultation

- Where students are involved in community and outside local council work, the nature and style of policy documents was not easy for pupils to access and respond to.

- Data from consultations may not be authentic or representative (e.g. middle class girls may be more likely to speak out).

- National or federal leadership forums had a majority from middle class schools, and the selection of only the best students to represent their school.

- It is difficult to ensure that, or track whether consultation influences the outcome.

6. Motives for participation

- There may be conflicting motives: some teachers want greater empowerment for pupils, but participation initiatives can sometimes be used as ways to control pupils and make them more **'pro-school'**.

- Students may want to participate only on one issue and nothing else (for example the Iraq war, or animal rights). There may be a debate on whether this matters.

OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPATION INPUTS AND THEIR OUTCOMES

This section pulls together points raised in previous sections. While in the previous section, a number of challenges were mentioned, none detract from the overall belief in student participation.

We have not come across a single study where a school or college has gone back on student involvement and actively decided that it is not wanted.

The worst that happens is that some of it dies because an enthusiastic teacher leaves or because a school council is not seen as particularly effective. Mostly, however, participation in decision-making starts a process going which starts to generate a chain of benefits.

These 'benefit chains' have been unarguably in the linked areas of behaviour, self-esteem and self-confidence of students, social and communication skills and greater feelings of efficacy. School ethos, happiness and teacher-student relationships are all reported to improve or even be transformed. The performance of teachers improves through systematic feedback from students. The evidence of impact on academic achievement is less clear cut or direct, and emerges, where it is found to make improvements, from the combination of the previous benefits. **Nowhere does academic achievement suffer as a result of participatory activities by students and of their greater agency in the school, and, given the other spin-offs, this review can say with confidence that it is worth pursuing the path of involving students in as many decision-making spaces of school and community as possible.**

We provide a table overleaf which summarises all the outcomes or benefits which emerge from different types of input. Although this is presented in list form, it has to be continually acknowledged that these are not linear causations, but interactive chains, and all might be better represented through a model such as below.

INPUTS   **BENEFITS**
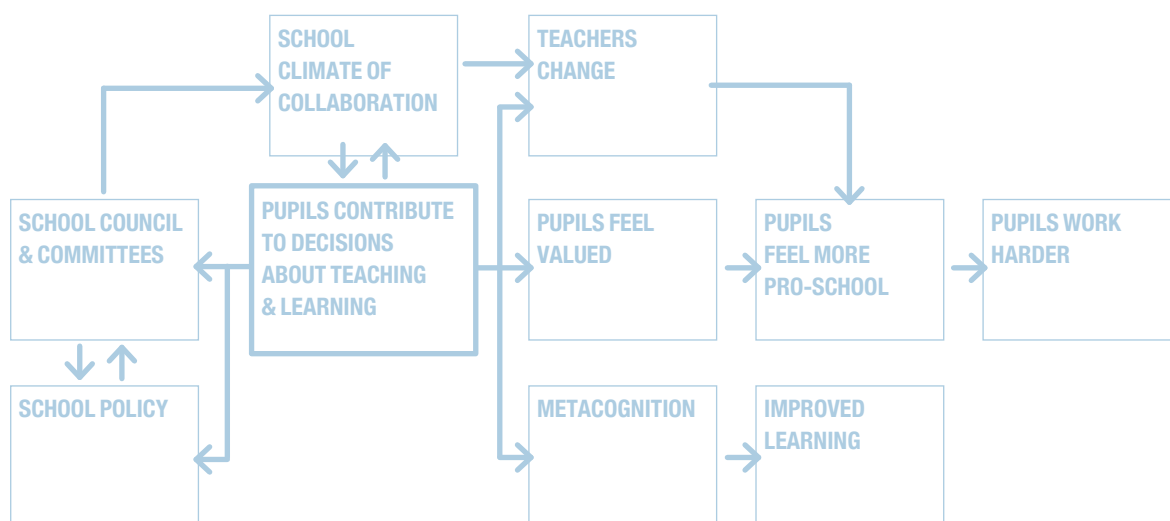
This shows an example of a virtual circle of pupil consultation, which might both emerge from a school climate of collaboration and respect or contribute to it. Similar diagrams could be drawn for all the **'inputs'** or **'outcomes'** below, and indeed in some ways they could all be reversed, so that eventually **'school ethos'** becomes an input into other benefits.

Yet in spite of all the causation difficulties and the critical commentary which follows this chapter, the cumulative picture from the research scrutinised is that student participation in decision-making has immense value and that it represents a movement which can only increase in scale and scope.

One sad reflection from reading many of the studies is how participation is actually not routine in so many schools, how these 'outcomes' do not derive from normal school practice.

What sort of school is it when the school council proudly announce that thanks to their work, pupils are now allowed to wear hats and jumpers in the playground? Why is it that pupils say that from some participatory initiative they now have gained confidence in speaking? What in their schooling had eroded or at least not provided that confidence before? Why is it so novel for a pupil to tell a teacher about how their teaching impacts on them, when pupils have up to 13 years of being on the receiving end and have a mass of cumulative experience? Why is it only in community work or mini-enterprises that pupils say they learn **'teamwork'**, when, again, they have been in groups of 30 all their school lives? The small **'victories'** from participatory activities point up how far we have to go before formal schooling truly meet the needs of children and young people.

One clear conclusion then from examining all the initiatives which are happening in schools and colleges is that no one **'**input**'** provides the answer.

An input such as a community service programme or starting a school council can provide an entry point, but on its own will not be sustainable without being embedded in a whole school ethos of participatory democracy and respect for children's rights.

Also, different entry points will be suitable for different educational contexts, depending often on how it is seen best to involve as many students as possible. Hence the list below is not in order of priority but is given to show briefly what are reported as outcomes from particular types of input, to enable decisions to be made about relative opportunity and opportunity cost, and what a particular input might bring. It reverses the presentation in the previous discussion of this Chapter by starting with the input on the left and then listing the outcomes associated with it, rather than examining a benefit and analysing why it should have occurred.

INPUTS OR APPROACHES TO PARTICIPATION AND THEIR CITED OUTCOMES OR AREAS OF BENEFIT

PARTICIPATION INPUT	OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS
School/student councils	• Pleasant and equitable school ethos • Skills (negotiation, decision-making, citizenship) • Improved physical environment of school (toilets, recycling, gardens etc; school food) • Improved policies such as homework, discipline • Self-esteem and confidence of councillors and representatives • Pride in the school • Responsible behaviour, maturity • Knowledge and experience • Better teacher-pupil relationships • More respect and equity between teachers and students
Service learning or community service experience; community projects resulting from citizenship courses	• Enjoyment of school • Learning and improved school performance • Social and political skills • Dispositions to act • Civic engagement and likelihood to volunteer • Likelihood to vote • Behaviour improvement • Career development • Reduced risk behaviours • Greater political knowledge, more political discussions with parents, • higher political efficacy
Consultation with pupils; student research and observation of lessons; pupil involvement in staff appointments	• A range of community improvements • Impact on learning: pupils see learning as a serious matter, use metacognition and higher order thinking skills; allows pupils to acquire a 'technical language' in talking about learning. • Impact on teaching: from student feedback; students discover aspects of teaching that other observers would not. • Better relationships, awareness of student problems, new ideas from students; • Awareness of children's rights • Support for new arrivals and vulnerable groups • Students feel valued and respected members of the school community • Better staff appointments made • Critical thinking skills
Whole year group or small group/action group activity such as eco groups, anti-violence task forces, healthy school task groups	• Violence-prevention strategies in the community Campaigns against smoking etc • Environmental action and improvement; design of new entrance for museum which was taken up; • Improved learning environment • Teamwork • Agency
Representation on other committees and local forums, student voice conferences	• Input into Council Children's Committee; input into Student Environment Council • Views on schooling and curriculum fed into local decision-making • Preparation for future active citizenship; confidence; understanding of local processes; • Decisions at that level informed by the voice of young people

PARTICIPATION INPUT	OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS
Student-led research and participation in school self-evaluation	• Students had sense of direction, ownership, greater efficacy • School had feedback. • Improved communication skills, increased knowledge of the research area and concepts • Greater confidence about future employment, increased desire to pursue further education.
Democratic school structures	• Enhanced democratic attitudes; • More race and gender tolerance • Greater scepticism that the government actually operates democratically
Student mentoring	• Impact on mentors and mentees; mentees make better decisions about their lives • Empathy • Sense of responsibility towards peers • Improved learning
Mini-enterprises	• Confidence, ability to work as a team, accepting responsibility • Vocational skills
Teacher initiated activities then taken up by volunteers	• Community social events to bring groups together • Gender and race tolerance
Students running their own blogs, discussion, running school newspaper; taking part in a TV phone-in programme	• Communication skills • Networking, social capital • Sense of being effective
International links and national and international fund raising	• Awareness of global concerns; • Additional funds for charities
Students represented at forums such as G8, Young People's Commission for Africa	• Awareness and knowledge, critical thinking, acting as ambassadors.
Whole school policy on active and student-initiated learning	• Learning styles • Behaviour
Involvement in projects such as CSV/Changemakers, Learning through Landscapes, Youth Action, Children's Fund projects	• Self-esteem, confidence, • Advocacy skills and social skills • Empowerment by taking on roles normally reserved for adults • Change in the community
Teachers and pupils together on demonstrations and protest rallies	• Sense of agency • Participation in adult world
For SEN students, linking cross-curricula participatory skills to individual education plans (IEPs)	• Greater engagement with learning; • Self-belief • Assertiveness
Drama and improvisation to relay certain social or political messages to others	• Challenges attitudes • Enables participants to deal with difficulties in their personal lives such as abuse or harassment
Out-of-school activities	• Situate youth in safe environments, prevent them from engaging in delinquent activities, teach skills and provide opportunities for youth to develop relationships with peers and mentors
Peer tutoring, child-to-child health projects; child as carers project	• Both sides of the teaching or caring relationship benefit • Community health improves

CHAPTER THREE: IMPACTS OF PARTICIPATION A CRITICAL COMMENTARY ON THE LITERATURE AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

A CRITICAL COMMENTARY ON THE LITERATURE

In its guidance, *Working together: giving children and young people a say*, the DfES presents the **'benefits'** of participation in decision-making through school councils and similar activities (Box 1). As is common within texts on the impact of participation, the evidence-base for these outcomes is not explicit, and many outcomes seem to be inferred or self-reported rather than demonstrated objectively. However, the list provides a useful benchmark as a starting point for this literature review, and is helpful in identifying areas where a better evidence-base for impacts could be developed.

The annotated bibliography published on the web www.carnegie-youth.org.uk briefly describes research studies and related sources that mention **'impacts'**, **'outcomes'** and **'benefits'** of participation. Studies range from large scale detailed quantitative research, to brief informal assessments. General questions about **evidence of impact** and balancing **cost-benefits** arise from these texts, which are relevant to those planning similar studies or designing evaluation as part of a participation activity. Many of these are reflected in the DfES study in 2003 Building a Culture of Participation[47].

BOX 1. WORKING TOGETHER: GIVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE A SAY

(DfES/0134/2004. Guidance)

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Actively involving children and young people when making decisions:

- sends a powerful message that children and young people of all ages are citizens too and should be listened to;

- supports the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – Article 12

- recognises children and young people as major stakeholders in society with important contributions to make in their education and how we design and deliver services;

- is a great opportunity for children and young people to see how rights go hand in hand with responsibilities.

LEAs and schools which have successfully involved children and young people have found the following benefits:

Children and Young People

- Develop new skills: debating, negotiating, group decision-making and influencing decision-makers.

- Understand how decisions are made and how to contribute to them.

- Recognise they are taken seriously, resulting in increased confidence, self-esteem and aspirations.

- Receive better services, more responsive to their needs.

- Become more motivated to get involved in their school and wider community.

The School

- Improved academic achievement through participative processes.

- Improved behaviour and attendance as alienation and disaffection diminish.

- A more inclusive environment.

- Enhanced curriculum provision, including PSHE.

- Contributes to meeting the NHSS.

- The creation of listening and democratic schools.

The LEA and the Wider Community

- Promotes democratic principles when decisions are reached taking many opinions into account.

- Takes pride in giving expression to children's rights.

- Children and young people act as citizens and contribute to community cohesion and social inclusion.

- Children and young people act as positive role models.

- Better preparation of young people for the world of work.

- Improves provision, uptake and cost effectiveness of services targeted at children and young people.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Most studies, even if they appear quantitative and **'empirical'**, are based on **perceptions** - often self-perceptions. Usually these are the perceptions of participants and activity organisers rather than other stakeholders, intended third party beneficiaries, or communities. For example, does the public perception of young people improve because they are participating in decision making? These 'in-house' self-perception studies are useful, but their strengths are probably more that they identify relevant issues and opportunities for developing the specific activities that were studied, rather than that they provide robust assessments of impact. However, even if self-perceptions of benefits such as 'greater confidence' and 'ability to speak out' are not unambiguous measures of those particular outcomes, they indicate that participants view the activity positively and do not consider it a waste of time. In the context of general school life, that itself is often a very significant outcome.

Many studies assume **direct causation** between the participatory activity and the benefit. In the context of a diverse and intense school life, this may sometimes be false. For example, can a distinct impact on school achievement be identified if the participatory activity is less than 1% of the time spent on teaching and learning? Longitudinal studies are particularly problematic because outcomes such as **'increased confidence'** may arise more from general personal development over 2 or 3 years than from a specific activity. Participatory activities may often function more as catalysts and agency for outcomes, rather than being the main causal factor.

However, this is not an unimportant role, and although a participatory activity may appear to play a small part, it may provide the crucial ingredient that precipitates a tangible outcome.

In some circumstances, **'outcomes'** may be better assessed in terms of the activity providing **agency**, for example by providing a space where children of different ages and race groups meet and learn to respect one another (like a good party). The tangible benefits may be later, elsewhere.

The significance of positive **'passive participation'** is ignored within the literature, for the obvious reason that it is very hard to assess. Outcomes such as **'speaking skills'**, **'speaking up'**, **'assertiveness'** are lauded; outcomes such as **'listening skills'**, keeping quiet if you have nothing useful to say, and facilitating weaker partners to present their views, are forgotten. Feminists might argue that this is a typically male dominated view of outcomes. Biographers of A.S. Neill remark on his ability to say virtually nothing throughout an entire school meeting, but when he did speak he demonstrated a command of all opinions in the room and a creative approach to problem-solving and conflict resolution.

Students might be taught that when they find themselves in disagreement with the majority, one strategy is to speak less and think more. Then if they have a genuinely innovative idea, it will be well presented and more likely to be taken up.

We need to be able to value and develop, and attempt to assess the seemingly passive aspects of participation. But how can we differentiate between those who contribute positively by listening keenly and saying little, and those who just opt out?

The impact of **'remote'** opportunities to participate is mentioned very little in the literature. This might include young people's websites in and outside of schools, and non-ICT strategies such as post and outreach work. This could provide benefits for students who cannot, or do not want to, be part of a committee, but still want to participate. This is particularly relevant in relation to special needs, children in hospitals or other forms of care, traveller children, and those who live abroad or travel frequently as part of an international family.

Another difficulty with impact evidence based on case studies is to determine whether successful outcomes result from a particular replicable method or strategy, or from a unique conducive context and/or talented and charismatic teachers and supporters. Can the activity be **scaled-up**? It is obviously not the responsibility of individual school teachers to ensure that they are working in a replicable manner, but funders and other organisations could encourage work that is less dependent on unique circumstances.

As an aspect of this, there seems no doubt that **leadership**, both by teachers and young people, is a vital ingredient. But in style it is likely to reflect the familiar sentiments of Lao Tzu:

a leader is best when people barely know he exists, not so good when people obey and acclaim him, worse when they despise him… But of a good leader who talks little when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say, "We did it ourselves".

The inherent difficulty is how to identify and understand the contribution that this style of leadership makes to the achievement of benefits from a participatory activity. More importantly, how do we identify and remedy failures because of an absence of such leadership? Remarkably few impact studies ask participants about the forms of leadership that have led to successful outcomes.

In some reports there appears to be a **mismatch** between the expected outcome and the nature of the activity. Why, for example, should activities set in 'after school-clubs' be expected to increase school performance? Surely the point is that these clubs are not an extension of schooling, but a place for completely different activities. Similarly, is it surprising that in 'centres that operated on a drop in basis, attendance was sporadic'? Surely accommodating sporadic attendance is the distinctive function of a drop-in centre. The first purpose of a 'field trip committee' is to arrange a field trip efficiently, not to improve accounting skills or relations between different race groups. Indirect or unexpected beneficial outcomes are obviously worth noting and nurturing, but they should not become an expected outcome unless there is good evidence to support that expectation. Apparent mismatches in activity descriptions and expectations of outcomes give the impression of hidden agendas operating in some settings, i.e. whatever the stated purpose of an activity the aim is social control and the improvement of school grades.

'Likelihood of voting' is still presented as a major goal and outcome of participation, yet throughout the western world the trend is that young people are finding other more effective ways to achieve **'direct democratic accountability'**, e.g. 'Battle of Seattle', anti-war protests, netizenship (citizen use of the net), phone-ins, pod-casting. Voting might be one 'means' to the 'end' of effective democracy, but it is not an 'end' in itself. In some cultural contexts, such as East Asia, decision-making by consensus is more significant than voting, and organisations such as the OECD use this approach. Voting is only one aspect of political accountability, and if national governance continues to be centred on political party systems, which have few benefits for an electorate and are seen as irrelevant and self-serving by young people, they will abstain. **Abstention is a rational and significant political act, and should not be presented as contrary to democracy.** In the future, history may well judge that abstention was a major precipitant of the positive evolution of arcane western style democratic systems.

THE BENEFITS AND COSTS OF PARTICIPATION

In general, studies are uncritical of participatory activities, and **hidden costs** are ignored. But there is an interesting area of exception: when there is an economic interest such as the payment of private companies to provide activities, or specific state funding. The approach and tone of these studies is conspicuously more aware and questioning, economically and politically, and reflect the style of a formal audit. In most other studies the direct and indirect economic costs are not considered, yet inputs such as teachers' time and administration clearly have a calculable value. When head teachers complain that participatory activities are **"a waste of time"**, that may well be a rational view, even if it is not expressed in a rational manner. To challenge these **"common sense"** objections to participatory activities, we need good balanced evidence that clearly takes account of both sides of cost-benefit arguments.

Similarly, the **time inputs of participants** are rarely seen as an **'input'** or **'cost'**. By comparison, when assessing the value of professional in-service training programmes, the salary cost of participants is considered very seriously. Young people have busy and demanding lives too, and not to value their time input as we would that of teachers and other adults is contrary to the central ethos of participatory endeavours.

Giving young people a "voice" should not be presented as doing them a favour. Their contribution should be appreciated as a highly valuable, specialist input into education decision-making.

The primary **'benefit'** should be better decisions, not just **"having a voice"**.

Few studies provide a **balanced view** of benefits and costs. One exception pointed out that children attending after school clubs may be missing positive family interaction. There are familiar arguments from subject teachers that, for example, children would gain more benefit from extra maths than from taking part in a meeting. But there seems to be no debate as to whether the same benefits that are attributed to participation might be achieved in other ways. For example, self-esteem and speaking skills may be equally well enhanced through an active philosophy lesson or public speaking class.

A result of this gap in assessment seems to be the absence of joined-up thinking. Few studies assess the **linkages** between school lessons that might teach about participation and related skills (e.g. history, politics, philosophy, accounting), and participatory activities such as school councils. To what degree is participation an effective whole school initiative? For example, does teaching about the suffragette movement, or apartheid South Africa, inspire girls and children from minority ethic groups to become more involved in democratic processes within a school? Does the formal teaching of literacy and **'oracy'** improve participatory skills at meetings? Do accountancy lessons improve budgeting skills? How do/could those involved in teaching relevant aspects of the formal curriculum work together with those running the participatory activities? Some form of formal educational input is a prerequisite for activities such as **"shadow forums"** (e.g. UN, local council, parliament), but the effectiveness of this seems not to have been researched.

The underlying assumptions of many impact studies reflect a "we're doing them a favour" attitude. The intellectual and other input of young people is usually only measured as a personal benefit, e.g. it 'improves self-esteem', or 'decision-making skills'. As a result, there is little attempt to assess and provide critical accounts of the quality of student inputs, and of the real value of the assumed benefits for others (e.g. better street lighting). Would we assess the value of a local council by claiming that it enhanced the skills of the councillors, and not that they had helped to make good decisions that improved public services? And would we never criticise the nature of the counsellors' inputs? Young people should benefit from having their inputs valued properly, but recognise that the cost of that approach will be an honest critical assessment of those inputs.

The 'containment function' (e.g. avoiding crime, drugs; child care for working parents) of activities is assumed to be an intrinsic benefit of many after-school activities. It is rarely considered that sometimes young people might find something better to do with their time. Should there be an assumption that "keeping them off the streets" is an intrinsically desirable outcome of all out-of-school-hours activities? Whilst proving a space for young people to relate to one another in a safe context is often a significant and valuable outcome, we need to recognise that the fine line between providing protection and creating a prison is easily crossed. When functioning properly, any form of sanctuary must have an exit that is as open as its entry. Activities in safe settings might extend to responsible risk-taking.

SUMMARY

QUESTIONS ARISING FROM THE LITERATURE TO INFORM METHODOLOGIES OF FUTURE RESEARCH

- Can **perceptions** studies assess a wider spectrum of stake-holder views, beyond the direct participants?

- How can claims about **direct causation** be viewed in the context of other influences? How can **agency** be identified and valued?

- How can positive **passive participation** be assessed?

- How can **remote** participation be encouraged through ICT, mail or outreach work?

- Can evaluations show how good practice might be **scaled-up**?

- How can **leadership** style be assessed and replicated?

- Can a **mismatch** between the nature and context of the initiative, and expected outcomes, be avoided?

- Should **likelihood of voting** be the paramount outcome of participation? How can participation in contemporary forms of **direct democratic accountability** be acknowledged?

- Can all evaluations take account of the **hidden costs** of activities?

- How can the **time inputs of participants** be considered in the same way as other inputs?

- How can those designing and assessing participatory activities develop a **balanced view** of other activities that may be equally or more beneficial?

- How can better **linkages** between participatory activities and formal teaching and learning be encouraged and assessed?

- How can we critically value and assess the **quality of student inputs**?

- How can beneficial forms of **containment**, which participatory activities often provide, be linked with controlled risk-taking in other settings?

ACHIEVING CHANGE

The questions for future research spelled out above form an interesting agenda. This review however has implications for a number of different audiences, as well as researchers. In this report, these are spelled out after the Executive Summary, giving implications for four types of stakeholder: schools, policy makers, students and inspectors. In spite of the reservations expressed in the previous section about the nature and assumptions of the literature, very clear inferences do emerge. It should not be forgotten that participation in decision-making is a right for young people, and therefore should not be negotiable; and that as a right, we should not necessarily be searching for outcomes or benefits other than those which accrue from one's rights being upheld. Yet strategically, if beneficial outcomes or 'side-effects' of participation can be demonstrated, then this can be valuable in the movement towards recognition of young people as persons with competences and contributions as well as rights.

The implications in common to all groups are fourfold:

1. Participation in real decision-making in school and outside has benefits for the individual, for academic achievement, for school culture and for the community.

2. Participation should be an entitlement for every student, and therefore ways must be found to ensure this entitlement in a systematic and sustained way. This implies a range of avenues that reach all pupils, that is, not just representative school councils or sporadic activities in sport, music and drama, but participation in decision-making threaded continuously through all the key aspects of school life and of teaching, learning and curriculum.

3. Students of all ages are competent to contribute to decision-making; yet both adults and children may need support and training in order to enhance these capabilities and to develop skills to use them in different settings (meetings, committees, consultations, interviews, research, web-based forums.

4. Everyone needs to be aware of the different forms of 'participation', and whether they genuinely mean a partnership and/or ownership of decisions, or whether they are elitist, tokenistic or remain at the level of 'voice' without that voice making much difference.

What has emerged from this review is that participation should not just be one of a list of additional things to do, but should be central to the business of schools. Those in power should take a lead to embed participation within the whole education system, and making links to teaching and learning, such participation will then progress from being a 'contribution' to school life, to being something that all schools are routinely expected to be evaluated on as a major part of their effectiveness.

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www.carnegie-youth.org.uk

ORGANISATIONS AND WEBSITES
PROVIDING EVIDENCE OF IMPACTS, CASE STUDIES AND OTHER INFORMATION

ACT (Association for Citizenship Teaching) records excellent school case studies which provide better direct evidence of impact than many formal research studies
www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk

British Youth Council provides manuals and trainings for setting up a participation project
www.byc.org.uk

Carnegie Young People Initiative works both in the field of research and piloting innovative projects for promoting children and young people's participation
www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/cypi/home

Changemakers provides learning programmes, funding schemes and research projects, publications for young people, schools, youth organisations, policymakers and employers
www.changemakers.org.uk

Children's Rights Alliance for England
www.crae.org.uk

Citizenship Foundation provides Youth Act! Project
www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk

CSV (Community Service Volunteers) Citizenship through participation and responsible action includes a list of 'the impact of ten years of active citizenship' from an evaluation of the Barclays New Futures projects
www.csvcommunitypartners.org.uk

DfES booklet Your Voice provides an accessible summary of Working together: giving children and young people a say which presents the 'benefits' from the students perspective
www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations

European Youth Portal is an initiative of the EC and has been suggested by Commission's White Paper 'A new impetus for European Youth'. Its aim is to give young people (between 15 and 25 years of age) access to relevant youth related information on Europe, and to enhance young people's participation in public life
http://europa.eu.int/youth/about_en.html

iNet (International networking for educational transformation) has produced a general bibliography of 'student voice' which includes texts on participation and impacts
www.sst-inet.net/olc/bibliography.aspx

Learn to Learn is a project of ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme
www.learntolearn.ac.uk

National Children's Bureau
www.ncb.org.uk

National Youth Agency
www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright

NCB and Young NCB (National Children's Bureau) promotes the interest and wellbeing of children and young people across all aspects of their lives, and advocates the participation of children and young people in all matters affecting them. Young NCB is a free membership network open to all children and young people, where they can be involved in issues that affect and interest them – safety, sex and relationships education, citizenship, bullying, drugs etc.
www.ncb.org.uk
www.youngncb.org.uk

NFER (National Foundation for Educational Research) have all the IEA Civic Education Study reports on their website
www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/citizenship

NHSS (National Healthy School Standard) Promoting young people's participation, discusses at length 'the benefits of participation' for young people, school improvement, and the wider school community
www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/participationguidance

Participation Works provides access to policies, practice, networks and information on young people's participation.
www.participationworks.org.uk

QCA details the 'benefits' of participation (see Box 1), and provides case studies
www.qca.org.uk/10005_10025.html

Save the Children
http://www.savethechildren.org.uk

Schools Councils UK propose, in The citizenship curriculum and effective school councils , that 'inputs' (e.g. training, incentives, environment) create 'outputs' for pupils (e.g. confidence, self-esteem, pride), staff (e.g. respect, improved relationships), and 'school' (e.g. communication, sense of community). The literature is not specific which inputs might lead to which outputs
www.schoolcouncils.org

Teacher Net
www.teachernet.gov.uk

UK Youth Parliament aims to give the young people of the UK, between the age of 11 and 18 a voice, which will be heard and listened to by local and national government, providers of services for young people and other agencies
www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk

Young People's Commission for Africa
www.ypcfa.net

Youth ACT supports groups of young people who want to achieve change in their school, youth club, or community, and reports success stories
www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk

A more detailed critic of these references can be found online at:
www.carnegie-youth.org.uk

Part of a programme of work managed by
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