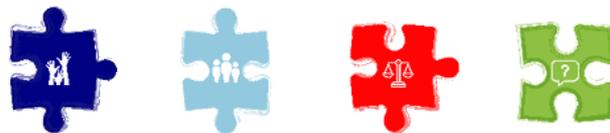


***Understanding participation from a  
Human Rights perspective:  
reflections on age-inclusive, cross-sectoral  
co-production of a model for democratic pupil  
participation in school governance***

Helen Dale and Jane Williams  
Observatory on Children's Human Rights  
Hillary Rodham Clinton School of Law  
Swansea University



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# Observatory on Children's Human Rights



The Observatory is a collaborative project with **International, National and Local partners**, providing:

- A forum for research,
- Debate, [Click to add text](#)
- Education and knowledge exchange on human rights of children and young people, and
- Working for realisation of human rights through policy, practice, advocacy and law reform.

**Empowerment through engagement**

Research

Embedding Rights

Accountability

Academics  
Children & Young People  
Non Governmental Organisations  
Government and other Public Bodies  
International Organisations  
Children's Legal Centre

Research  
Projects  
Publications

Evaluations Monitoring  
& Reporting  
Developing Tools  
Raising Knowledge

Children's  
Legal Centre

Law Reform  
Policy Changes  
Practice Changes

Better Rights-Based  
Decision Making  
Culture Change

Access to Justice  
for Children  
Redress  
Learning from mistakes  
Increased Knowledge

# Understanding Participation Initiative

‘a multi-year research project that seeks to provide better understandings of school-based participatory processes and to explore the relationship between ‘every day’ participation, structured participation in schools and participation in democratic civic structures at local and national levels’

Based at the Observatory on Children’s Human Rights, Swansea University



# URSschool 2017 - 18



- One primary and one secondary school, both 'rights respecting'
- Secondary school parliament
- Primary school Council
- Our role: support for pupils' own research using Children as Researchers methods;
  - facilitation of impact (Senedd event;
  - meeting with Hillary Rodham Clinton);
  - Street Law sessions for each 'cabinet'



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# Wider context of research

- The problem of ‘political disengagement’ of the young
- Growth of ‘pupil voice’ in school governance: mandatory school councils in Wales
- Youth parliaments: in Wales, the Campaign for the Children and Young People’s Assembly for Wales 2014 – 2018 and the Welsh Youth Parliament 2018 –
- Not ‘the right to participate’ but children’s participative human rights: in Wales, the ‘due regard’ duty
- Agendas for reform of curriculum content and delivery: in Wales, ‘Successful Futures’
- International: children as human rights defenders (UN Day of General Discussion September 2018)

# School Parliament

- School-based initiative: elected representatives from each class in each year
- Four cabinets, mirroring sub-committees of school governing body
- 2017-18 topics selected by cabinets:
  - Teaching and Learning: Pupils interaction in lessons
  - Community, Ethos and Wellbeing: Getting pupil voice heard through the parliament
  - Business and Resource: Perform a silent fire drill
  - Standards and Provision: The impact of new student uniform

# Application of Children as Researchers Method



## 6 stages

- Rights approach and selecting the topic
- Research methods and planning
- Data collection and analysis
- Planning for age-inclusive co-production
- Follow up with children
- Age-inclusive co-production and future planning

## UR School: School Parliament

- Cabinets selected their 'top 3' topics and voted for 1
- Surveys online using Hwb and data visualisation
- Over 300 surveys completed per cabinet
- Presentation of analysis and recommendations
- Future planning with school governing body



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# Cabinet recommendations

- Teaching and Learning: Teachers should vary their teaching styles and ways of interacting with pupils to suit the needs of all learners.
- Community, ethos and wellbeing: School Parliament members need to be more visible around the school.
- Business and resource: promote silent fire drills and measure impact on day to day movements around school
- Standards and Provision: WG should NOT end funding for school uniform for families with low income

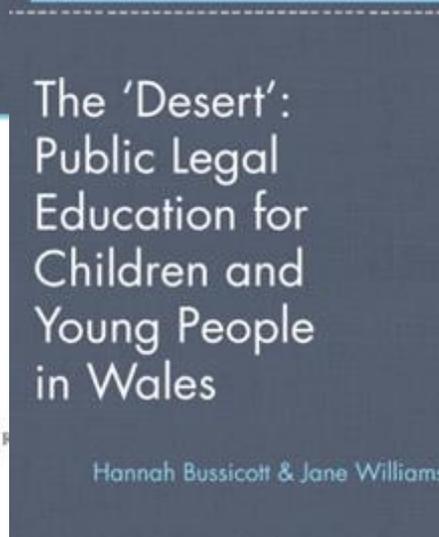
# Impact and Influence

- Actions adopted in School development plan for implementation in next academic year
- Pupils attend Senedd to promote recommendations
- Pupil participation in 'DGD Hub'
- Meeting Hillary Rodham Clinton
- Street Law sessions



# What have we learned?

- Formal participative structure within the school, combined with staff facilitation, engaged high numbers of research participants
- Staff and pupils loved working with the University, especially on campus
- ‘Learning by doing’ compared with learning concepts: ***‘Democracy? No offence, Miss, that sounds dead boring: we want to know how to change the law!’***
- The School Parliament, larger than school council, engaged inclusively – not just ‘the usual suspects’
- Street Law sessions warmly welcomed



## Training Manual



Helen Dale and Arwyn Roberts



- <http://www.swansea.ac.uk/law/crhr/>
- <https://childrenslegalcentre.wales/>
- <http://www.swansea.ac.uk/law/wales-observatory/>
- <https://www.lleisiaubach.org/home>

