


# Developing Concepts of Participation with Early Childhood Studies Students

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# Origins of the Study

- ◆ developing teaching and learning approaches with undergraduates
  - ◆ supporting the development of social participation and responsibility in future early years professionals
  - ◆ gender and academic success
  - ◆ developing student autonomy
  - ◆ possible implications for the early years workforce
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# Literature Review

- ◆ Smith (2001, p. ) suggests that citizenship education in schools relates more to the contemporary model which 'Results from, and reflects, the political requirements of a modern market economy.'
- ◆ Cleaver et al. (2005) determines factors influencing the effectiveness of citizenship education
  - Lack of genuine opportunities for participation in school policy-making
  - Over 70% of teachers not trained to deliver citizenship education
  - traditional teaching, limited opportunities for interaction, lack of consultation on curriculum or delivery
  - Pre-determined curriculum in contradiction to concept of actively negotiated concepts of citizenship

- ◆ Stasiulis (2004, p. 296) sees citizenship 'as an unstable set of social relations actively negotiated and contested between individuals, states, other political communities, territories, and between the realms of the private and public.'
- ◆ Harkavy (2006) argues that the commercialization of universities contradicts their stated aspirations to promote democracy and citizenship education, with students focusing on individual attainment of credentials for careers
- ◆ Nixon (2004, p.115) discuss the idea of a 'new Aristotelianism' which aims to tread the line between the Socratic idea of negative wisdom and Aristotle's moral emphasis on taking the 'right action'.

# Methodology- Sample

## Cohort 1

4 full-time groups of 25 each

## Cohort 2

1 part-time group of 15 (mature students)

## Cohort 3

4 full-time groups of 25 each

## Cohort 4

1 part-time group of 27 (mature students)

# Methodology- Action Research

- ◆ students evaluated the links between pedagogical approaches on the module and content learning through small group activities in 3 phases
  - What they learned
  - How they learned most effectively
  - The links between these
- ◆ students discussed what they understood about citizenship and participation
- ◆ staff evaluated and developed the pedagogical approaches after each phase in response to findings

# Cohort 1 Findings about Successful Learning Methods

- ◆ working in groups for developing ideas and concepts
  - seminar discussion groups
  - presentation groups /sharing individual research
- ◆ lectures for learning about theory
- ◆ videos for learning about cultural differences

# Cohort 1 Findings about Concepts of Participation


- ◆ increased awareness of rights issues
- ◆ knowledge of rights in different cultures
- ◆ awareness of own relative privileges
- ◆ awareness of their own roles/participation as consumers and professionals
- ◆ still maintained more dutiful notions of participation
  - social rules and requirements
  - social responsibility
  - rights

# Cohort 2 Findings

- ◆ findings about effective pedagogies were similar to first group
- ◆ findings about concepts of citizenship reflected some differences
  - increased political and media awareness
  - need to listen to/consult children in their care
  - significance of their own role/participation as consumers, workers, citizens
  - concepts of citizenship were significantly more participatory than the first group's

# Cohort 3 Findings

- ◆ findings about learning methods were similar to other groups
- ◆ greater emphasis on learning about learning processes e.g. groupwork; discussion and debate; listening; time management; use of reading; research skills; presenting work; and sharing and respecting a range of views
- ◆ higher level of awareness of their own roles and responsibilities in terms of supporting and promoting children's rights and participation

- ◆ awareness of wider responsibilities for community involvement
  - ◆ more comments about changed perceptions of the world around them ('it has influenced the way we view society')
  - ◆ different perceptions about the issues they were studying
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- A decorative graphic of a teal mountain range is located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

# Cohort 4 Findings

- ◆ findings about learning methods were similar to other groups
- ◆ however, solitary learning processes were also identified as a significant learning method
- ◆ less emphasis on learning processes than cohort 3 and more on content
- ◆ a high level of awareness of their powerful position with reference to empowering young children by increasing opportunities for children to make choices, and for these choices to be *acted* on.

- ◆ community awareness and responsibility for community involvement. “as individuals we have responsibility to ourselves, those around us and the wider environment”.
- ◆ students highlighted the importance of discussion and debate as a learning tool, and recognised the importance of community engagement as central to citizenship, but the connection between them was not identified.

# Summary

- ◆ for all 4 cohorts the most successful pedagogies used were active and encouraged autonomy and collaboration
- ◆ phase 3 students recognised their learning processes as a type of learning and showed higher levels of recognition of their own need for participation than the similar cohort of phase 1 students.

- ◆ phase 3 and 4 students demonstrated connections between pedagogy and notions of participation as reflected in the module e.g. in terms of participatory roles and responsibility in empowering children but did not explicitly make this link

# Conclusions

- ◆ the 4 phases demonstrated differences possibly relating to maturity of the students and minor changes in the pedagogical approach
- ◆ the use of interactive pedagogies appeared to support students to develop understanding about their own participation both as learners and members of communities . “as individuals we have responsibility to ourselves, those around us and the wider environment”.
- ◆ in the last two cohorts students explicitly said they understood more about their roles in supporting children’s participation and empowering children through their work with them

# References

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  - ◆ Smith, M. (2001) 'Education for Democracy'.
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