

An Chomhairle
Mhúinteoireachta

The Teaching Council



Title of Research Project: Hear Me Roar! Pumping up the Volume of the Student Voice in the 21st Century Second Level School

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Relevant key words: Student voice, Student contribution, Co-construction, Student council, Student centred approach.

Summary:

This action research project aimed to amplify student voice in a mid-western, single sex (girls) post-primary voluntary secondary school with a population of 403 students. Student representatives from each class group ($n=16$) in the school volunteered and joined forces with the student council ($n=19$) to assess the level of student voice in the school and to co-construct ways in which it can be amplified. This qualitative study gleaned the perspectives of students, teachers and management through surveys, focus groups, round table meetings and interviews. These methods gave the base level of voice in the setting and were designed to make the voice of the student heard on the matters that were deemed to be important by them. A professional external training programme run by the Youth Advocacy Programme (YAP) and culminating in an “Investing in Children” (IIC) Award was carried out to equip the students with the necessary language and skills to optimise their vocal contribution in the classroom and throughout the school. This provided the catalyst for change and engaged students in co-constructing a language that enabled them to speak confidently about their issues. Lundy (2007) and Fleming (2013) are authorities on this topic and their work gave this study structure. Lundy’s model of participation (2007) claims that students need a voice to reflect and a safe space to express their views. Following Fleming’s (2013) example, one action focused on entering into dialogue with

students to discover what was going well in the classroom and what could be changed. In the course of this research, students were empowered to have their say in an environment that was equal and fair and ensured that their voices were listened to, respected and that their views were acted upon. A [PowerPoint presentation](#) tracking the journey of the research from the initial idea to the implementation of the action research methods and results was constructed and delivered to other schools and at conferences. Through this important research a Student Voice Community of Practice was established in Limerick Education Centre where knowledge can be shared with others and where we can learn from others who are implementing ways of incorporating Student Voice into their practices.

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