

Young People's Participation; Beyond New Labour

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Introduction

- Research Context
- Key Findings Summary
- Post New Labour
- Participation in Austerity
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Research Aims

- The social and political motivation of New Labour's participation policy objectives.
- Local Authority (LA) mechanisms and opportunities for 'participation' in policy and service decisions.
- Young people's experience of 'participation' in LA forums and groups.

Defining 'Participation'

“A holistic way of thinking and acting that put people’s need at the core, and that promotes partnerships and solidarity among people, governments, organisations and institutions to achieve social justice”.

(Participation Development Forum 2006)

Rights Based Context

“Children have the right to participate in the decision-making processes that may be relevant in their lives and to influence decisions taken in their regard, within the family, the school or the community” (UNCRC, Article 12 – 1989 www.unicef.org)

Policy Context

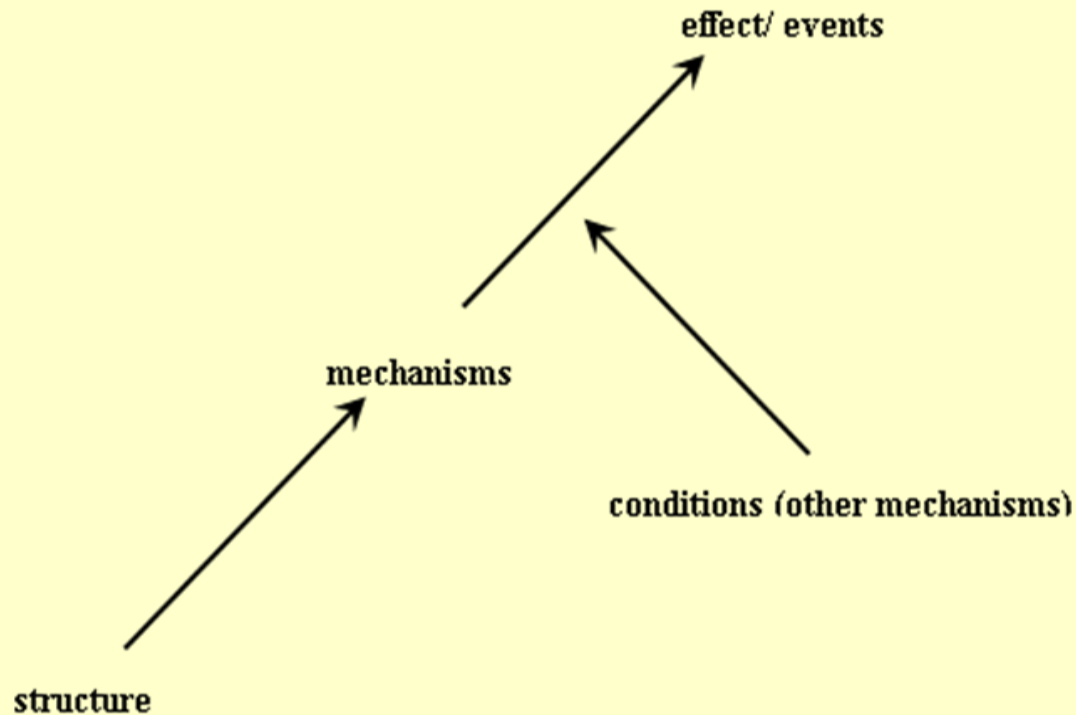
“The Government wants children and young people to have more opportunities to get **involved in the design, provision and evaluation of policies and services that affect them or which they use**”. (CYPUP, 2001 :5).

In whose interest?

“One needs to be clear whether the ultimate aim of participation is enfranchisement i.e. helping young people **make the most of opportunities available** to them, under existing systems and structures? Or is it about ‘empowerment’ which recognises that **young people may demand to change the current systems and structure**”.

(Youth Directorate Council of Europe, 1997: 30)

Critical Realism & Causal Relationships



A Critical realist view of causal relationships (Sayer, 2001:15).

Key Findings

- **‘Spaces for participation’:** Replicate adult structures.
- **Representation:** reliance on existing ‘Youth Forums’.
- **Opportunities:** Issues outside of policy objectives fail to get recognition.
- **Mechanisms:** lack transparency and lines of accountability.
- **Outcome:** lack of tangible evidence of structural ‘change’.

Youth Forum Aims

“Well it’s really about getting young people’s views across and **making sure young people have a voice and are represented**”. (Lewis,15 - YP)

“Young people’s views and taking them to the council to listen to, and **if they are not listened to, to take them further, like to the head of the council**”. (Colin,16 - YP)

“We’re trying to get young people involved [...] trying to get them to realise it’s not the adults making the decisions all the time, **you can actually, [...] get your voice heard**. (Leigh,18 - YP)

‘Hard to Reach?’

“[Our area is] very diverse, we have a very urban close knit area but then we have a huge rural area, which is really where **young people are disadvantaged by geography**”. (Carol, LA 7)

“The local youth forum it’s led by the Youth Service. [...] We need to **open up that Youth Forum to a much wider agenda**”. (Jean, LA 5)

“[We need to work with] groups that are **harder to reach** like, the **young asylum seekers, [...] young travellers [and] ethnic minority groups**. (Jeff, LA 6)

Wider Communities

“I work with a lot of young people, who are ‘disadvantaged’, I hate using that terminology, but young people **who aren’t as articulate** as other people, or [...] **they kind of speak their mind** and there might be **a bit language comes out**.
[...] I think it can be **difficult for young people who have had such a hard time to be listened to**. (Alison, LA 2)

Who is missing?

“There’s [...] hundreds of different young people, people who are interested. [...] I think the only people’s views that they really get [...] is people [...] **who are sort of good, like an angel, they really don’t go up to people from council estates. [...] They just pick the perfect person, you come on, and you can come and speak to us. [...] They don’t have a clue what’s going on in council estate and deprived areas, [...] probably from somewhere posh!** “(Susan, YP 5)

“We need [...] get involved in other communities who probably **wouldn’t sit in a meeting**. [...] What we do need is people like **off the streets, who have views but don’t want to sit in a meeting**. [...] At the moment it’s more like the posh end of town area that are doing the meetings. [...]

INT

“What you mean by posh?”

COLIN

“Like **quite a lot of the group live in big posh houses and go to private school**”. (Colin, YP 4)

Clear Benefits

- Getting 'voices' heard and **'influencing change'**.
- Access to **new opportunities** and development of new skills.
- **Address local issues** and personal concerns.
- **Increased confidence** and understanding of 'participation'.
- New skills, **enhances Curriculum Vitae (CV)**, and provide a progression route.

E.G: Chris Monk

Post 12th May 2010

- Department for Children, Families and Schools (DfCFS): **Closed** - 'Participation' Shift: **Ministry of Defence**
- **£81bn cut from public spending** by 2014-15
- £7bn extra welfare cuts: **incapacity, housing benefit and tax credits**
- Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA): **Abolished**
- Tuition Fees: **trebled to £9,000.**
- Housing benefit: **Slashed.**

Spending Review

- 7% cut to local councils budgets from April 2011. (HM Treasury, 2010)
- Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003): ‘outcomes’ replaced with ‘**help children achieve more**’ (Baker, 2011).
- Connexions: **Only 15 of 144 local authorities** maintain carers service (Hooley and Watts, 2011)
- CAMHS: **Local authority cuts of up to 30%** (Young Minds, 2012/2013)
- **£199m cuts to youth service funding 2010-2012** (Unison, 2016)

Positive for Youth (DfE, 2010)

“We believe that all young people [13 – 19] should have access to local and national opportunities to develop skills for life and work and to create a more responsible, engaged and cohesive society. We also want to **encourage young people to have their say on issues which matter to them; and decision-makers at local and national levels to listen to them**”

Delivering Positive Youth

- Youth Voice
- UK Youth Parliament
- Local Youth Forums
- National Scrutiny Group
- Youth Select Committee
- Local Youth Councils



A Message to Young People

“In this **difficult financial climate**, the Government knows that **you may be concerned about your future or about the future of local services for you**. It also knows that many young people still need early help to **overcome the disadvantages they face in life**, or to protect them from harm”. (DfES, 2011: 9)



Young People and 'Austerity'

'Austerity'

“A situation in which there is not much money and it is spent only on things that are necessary”

or

“Enforced or extreme economy”



(<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/austerity>)

Austerity Lives

- Unemployment **rates 3 x higher** for 16-25.
- 2018, unemployment predicted to affect a **3rd of all 16-25**.
- **21% increase** in calls to Citizens Advice regarding debt last year.
- **72 % of 18 -21 earning less than the living wage.**
- **Unemployment:** 16 – 17 = 27.7%, 18-24= 11.9%
February-April 2016. (Unison, 2016)

- **Poverty or Social Exclusion:** 32.6% of under 18 at risk end of 2015.
- **Material Deprivation:** 10.5% of under 18.
- **Unemployment:** 16 – 17 = 27.7%, 18-24= 11.9% February-April 2016. (Unison, 2016)
- Approx. **35,000 are in homeless accommodation**, with hostels always full or oversubscribed www.ukyouth.org – accessed 22/3/17)
- Mental Health: **235,000 young people** in contact with NHS at the end of June 2016 (Campbell and Marsh, 2016)

Youth Service Cuts

Total cuts in youth service spending, 2010-2016

2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	TOTAL
£62m	£137m	£41m	£24m	£85m	£38m	£387m

	2012-14	2014-16	Total 2012-16
Youth work jobs lost	1,991	1,661	3,652
Youth centres closed	359	244	603
Places for young people cut	40,989	97,909	138,898

(Unison, 2016 A future at risk: Cuts in youth services)

I Predict a Riot!

David Cameron:

- Gang culture and knife crime.
 - Young black men.
 - Benefit cheats
 - No political causal factors
 - Mindless looters
 - David Cameron: 'feral scum'.
- Those under 25, **17% aged between 11 and 17** (Infed.org).



Participation in Informal Education

“Its’ youth services which **prevent problems happening in the first place** by reducing **feelings of isolation** among young people [...] they’ve been relentlessly cut and undermined at a time **when they are needed more than ever**”. (Unison, 2016)

Impact on Youth Service Users

- 80% young people feel less empowered
- 71% harder for young people to stay in formal education
- 65% were finding it harder to get jobs
- 77% increase mental health issues
- 70% rise in increased alcohol substance misuse
- 83% increased crime and anti-social behaviour.

(Unison, 2016)

'Hard to Reach'?



- 91% particular impact on young people from **poorer backgrounds**.
- 57% services for women and girls had been affected.
- More than half of services for **BAME, LGBT and Disability** groups have been affected.

'Recognised Participation'

“Young people around the country will have a **renewed sense of worth knowing the Government values their views and opinions**. I’m really looking forward to working with the Government and our supporters to ensure that together **we can continue to play an active role in our democracy.**” (Jon Foster, 2016 Chair of the British Youth Council)

Conclusion

Spaces for participation and policies have become:

“New projects [...] exerting ‘top down’, hegemonic pressures and the rhetoric of participation and empowerment. [...] Defining narrow parameters for young people’s participation also has detrimental implications for reaching and involving disengaged young people”.

(Melbourne’s, 2010: 34)



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