

# Schools and Their Communities: Pupil and Teacher Perceptions of Community Action

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# Summary

Questionnaire and interviews given to 13-15yr olds investigating their self reports of community based and pro-social behaviour as well as their perception of the benefits and barriers to community engagement.

Outcomes of which were compared to teacher interviews

# Background to Research

Undertaken as part of a pilot commissioned by the last British government's Youth Community Action (YCA) initiative.

12 schools in the South East of England were funded to engage their pupils in a range of activities related to 'Community Action':

*which '...can involve any kind of activity that involves doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives or to benefit the environment'*

# Theoretical Framework

Labour Government (1997-2010) introduced a number of policies which encourage the community involvement of pupils and their development as 'responsible citizens'.

The YCA encouraged pupils to undertake 50 hours of community action by the age of 19. (new government has proposed a National citizens Service)

# Theoretical Framework

Research questions therefore relate to what is meant by 'community' (Annette 2008) and 'participation' i.e.

Vertical (community activities, charities, sports clubs) or

Horizontal (political affairs, real decision making (Jochum et.al 2005, Keating et.al 2010))

# Theoretical Framework

from the pupils' and teachers' perspective:

To what extent does self reported aspects of personal characteristics and pro-social behaviour relate to and community engagement behaviour?

# Methodology

- ▶ Questionnaires to 4592 pupils from 12 schools
- ▶ 614 returned (24.0%)
- ▶ 11 semi structured interviews and 1 focus group in 9 schools
- ▶ 8 semi structured interviews with teachers.

# Methodology

Questionnaire 4 sections

- ▶ **Community Engagement**

I am a an active member of a club or community organisation

- ▶ **Pro Social behaviour**

I share with others, for example CD's, games, food

- ▶ **Personal Characteristics/Ambition**

- ▶ I get easily distracted

- ▶ **Social Behaviour**

- ▶ I generally spend my spare time alone or keep to myself



# Methodology

- ▶ Interview

Similar sections, with additional questions related to opportunities and barriers to engaging in community action

Research undertaken June 2010

# Findings - Questionnaire

## Factor analysis

- ▶ f1 Social Citizenship
- ▶ f2 Distraction and anxiety
- ▶ f3 Community engagement
- ▶ f4 Neighbourhood and Community Awareness
- ▶ f5 Getting on well with others

# Findings - Questionnaire

## Factor analysis

- ▶ F1 Social citizenship - a clustering of answers from questions generally concerned with caring and helping behaviours, positive attitudes to befriending others and being kind.

# Findings - Questionnaire

Factor analysis

- ▶ F1 Social citizenship.

# Findings - Questionnaire

## Factor analysis

- ▶ F1 Social citizenship - a clustering of answers from questions generally concerned with caring and helping behaviours, positive attitudes to befriending others and being kind.

# Findings - Questionnaire

## Factor analysis

- ▶ F4 Neighbourhood and Community Awareness - indicated a link across our data set between pupils' knowledge of their local neighbourhood and community and a concern for it.

# Findings - Questionnaire

## Factor analysis

- ▶ pupils' self-reporting of behaviours and attitudes relating to social citizenship do not load into a common factor with their reporting of community involvement or neighbourhood and community awareness

# Findings - Questionnaire

Significant gender difference in various aspects (Chi <sup>2</sup>)e.g.

- ▶ I look after the environment
- ▶ I am helpful if someone is hurt or unwell
- ▶ I often volunteer to help others



# Findings - Questionnaire

However, this difference was removed, when the results for a selective girl school were removed e.g.

- ▶ I have a good knowledge of the local community
- ▶ I get easily distracted
- ▶ I get on better with adults than people my own age

# Findings - Questionnaire

in contrast to Factors 1 and 4, our dataset suggested no gender differences in responses to those questions grouped in Factor 4 – ‘I help out in the community’ and ‘I am an active member of a club or community organisation’ – perhaps contradicting the traditional view of male/female pro-social behaviour

# Findings - Interviews

Notable differences between:

- Selective girls (**instrumental**) school other schools (**activity based**)
- Teachers (**able to identify a number of activities and benefits**).

# Findings - Interviews

- Sources of information (pupils school, teachers wider sources)
- Barriers to engagement **Practical**: distance, cost, safeguarding (teachers), safeguarding (age at which able to undertake activities)
- **Dispositional** – peer pressure

# Reflection

Areas for further research are:

- ▶ The relationship between the school and the community
- ▶ The long term impact of engaging in community based activities.
  - For pupils
  - School effectiveness

Further  
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