

Between theory and practice.

Early years education and the implementation of the right to self-determination of the child, twenty-five years after the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Federico Farini
f.farini@mdx.ac.uk

Angela Scollan
a.scollan@mdx.ac.uk

Shirley Allen
s.f.allen@mdx.ac.uk

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This presentation

Discusses the result of a small-scale pilot research on the meanings of the right to self-determination of the child among Early Years (EY) practitioners and perspective practitioners

1) The self-determination of the child, the socio-cultural context

With regard to legislation (becoming the *right* of self-determination, cf. UNCR, articles 12, 13, 15), to the success of child-initiated pedagogies, to its relevance within the discourse on childhood

2) The research

Explores the meaning of children's self-determination for students and practitioners in EY, and their perspectives on its implementation within EY practice

3) Conclusion and ways forward

The research

Research questions:

How students and practitioners in EY:

- 1) understand children's self-determination
- 2) look at the implementation of this fundamental right within Early Years practice

The aims of the research:

Identify and formulate dominant trends in the meanings of children's right to self-determination among perspective and EY practitioners

The research & this presentation:

By discussing the results of the research, this presentation aims to

- 1) give voice to practitioners,
- 2) offer insights of the limits of the promotion of children's participation to their own education as currently practiced,
- 3) underpin future professional training opportunities and research

The socio-cultural context

Legislative framework

- United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989
- UK ratification, 1991

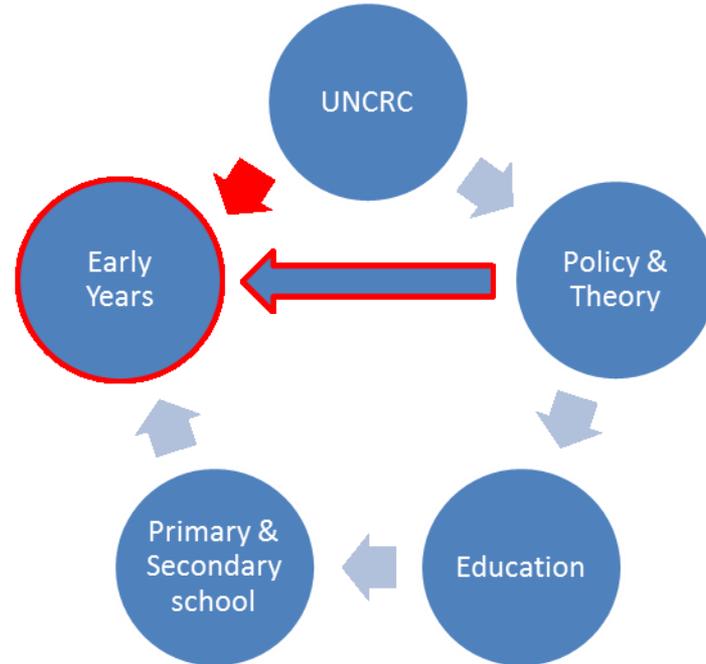
The UNCRC and the self –determination of the child

- As important as the rights related to protection
- Articles 12, 13 and 15. Some criticalities

Cultural framework

- Children as competent actors
- From child-centred to child-initiated pedagogies
- Children as active part in designing their own educational experience

The socio-cultural context: the problem of the implementation of SD in EY practice



Methodology of the research

Small-scale pilot in view of PHD research (Started September 2014)

Qualitative approach, interested in practitioner and perspective practitioners' meanings of children's self-determination and the possibilities of its implementation in Early Years Education

6 Focus groups with students undertaking a children's rights module on a BA Hons. Programme in Early Years

11 individual semi-structured interviews to EY practitioners in the London Area

Results

Children's right to self-determination in Early Years Education, the practitioners' voices:

What does it mean? Is its promotion a responsibility for EY education ?

Analytical categories

Trust Vs Distrust (Risk Vs Control)	Responsibility of EY practice in the promotion of children's Right of self-determination
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Attitude of EY practitioners towards the promotion of the right of self-determination

Results

Trust Vs Distrust (Risk Vs Control)

- The concept of trust
- Trust in education (expertise or interpersonal relationship?), the position of *childhood studies*

Results. *Trust Vs Distrust (Risk Vs Control)*

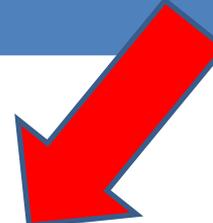
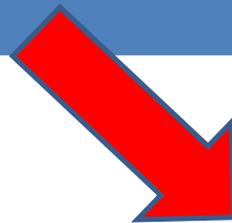
Right to self-determination is primary understood as right to **protection and safeguarding**

Empowerment is understood within a safeguarding framework, as development of children's capacity to protect themselves from external harm

Limits of trust

Trusting children is understood as giving them voice within activities planned and controlled by adults (protection of children from themselves)

Right of self-determination to be promoted within adult-prepared environment. Control and protection come before trust and risk with some limits



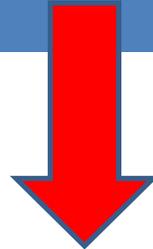
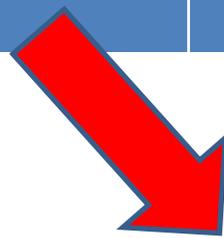
Child-centred pedagogy, but not child-initiated pedagogies

Results. *Responsibility of EY practice in the promotion of children's Right of self-determination*

EY practice may **have an impact** in the promotion of the right to self-determination

impact of **external factors** sending different messages to children about their right to self-determination (families)

conflict between protection of the child and promotion of self-determination (boundaries and power to set boundaries)



Need of reflective practice in the promotion of the right to self-determination

Conclusion

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Early Years Pedagogy	Trust	Distrust
Knowledge and understanding of UNCRC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Explicit examples •Open peer dialogue 	From child centred towards child initiated Support self determination	Choice levels from adult towards the child
Risk acceptance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Accountability – shift and change is acceptable •Challenge habit and routine 	Learning together Adult led and initiated Process of planning	Adult language to control Tokenism Childs voice – no impact? Why?
Explicit understanding and discussion of key terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Child centred •Child initiated •Adult centred •Adult initiated 	Empowerment built via everyday interactions (Not because one is told to be)	Empowerment within boundaries set by adults Control of participation
Reflexivity about assumption and experiences	Power Explicit use of rights based language	Self-determination understood to be a risk – Children to be protected from themselves

THANK YOU!

Angela Scollan,
a.scollan@mdx.ac.uk

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