Look who's talking: factors for considering the facilitation of very young children's voices

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Abstract

Grounded in children's rights, this paper advances understanding of the affordances and constraints in implementing Article 12 of the UNCRC in educational settings with young children – those under seven. It starts from the premise that if we are to foster children and young people's democratic skills and understanding, we need to develop practices that support this from the earliest age. The paper presents the outcomes of a seminar series facilitating dialogue amongst international academics working in the field and a range of early years practitioners. This opportunity for extended dialogue led to the development of a rich and sophisticated conceptual clarity about the factors that need to be considered if Article 12 is to be realised with very young children. Eight factors were identified as pivotal for consideration when facilitating voices with this age group: Definition; Power; Inclusivity; Listening; Time and Space; Approaches; Processes; and Purposes. This paper explores each in turn and proposes a series of provocations and questions designed to support practitioners in their endeavour to elicit young children's voices**.**

Keywords: children's voice; children's rights; participation; young children

Introduction

All four of the General principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the right to non-discrimination, the right to their best interests, the right to life, survival and development and the right to express their views and feelings (United Nations, 1989), are equally applicable to babies and young children as they are to older children and young people (Smith, 2016). In rights discourse (for example, Dixon and Nussbaum, 2012) we acknowledge that rights intersect with notions of agency and vulnerability, so that individual children will have more or less access to the understanding and use of their rights depending on individual intersectional circumstance: for example, class, disability or being a member of a marginalised culture. Moreover, the general principles do not jigsaw neatly together –in specific cases these rights can overlap or appear to be in conflict. In this paper, we place voice – to include Articles 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 under this overarching principle - in the foreground with a recognition that the other principles and their attendant articles are present and relevant. Within discussion of children's rights, there is a tendency to forget about their application to the youngest: with no specific mention of early years education in the original UNCRC document, and despite an amendment of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its General Comment No.7 (2005). This skew is arguably greater with the latter principle, the right to voice, enshrined in Article 12, as voice is so often presumed to be verbal: what does voice look like in a child who is non-verbal, pre-verbal or emergent verbal?

While much has been written about children's voice and supporting children to air their views, little has been written that focuses specifically on facilitating the voices of very young children (Clark 2005; Smith 2016; Wall 2017). This article addresses a lacuna in the work of children's rights and participation by offering key factors that require consideration by those working to facilitate and advance young children's voices and influence. As acknowledged by Bartels, Onstenk and Veugelers (2016), even very young children are 'involved in social life and society' (p. 681), and if their voices are to be supported and have influence then it is important that this is encouraged and facilitated.

If we can accept that voice is wider than the spoken word, it is also difficult to determine which matters do, and which do not, affect children since they, like adults, exist in a world affected by universal issues such as climate change, war and economics (Cassidy, 2016; 2017). Children are, as Biesta, Lawy and Kelly (2009) assert, 'part of the social fabric' (p.20). Given these circumstances, it is important to note that while Article 12 advocates children's right to express their views in matters affecting them, it also suggests that their views be 'given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity'. This, in essence, requires judgements to be made by adults about the maturity of the children being consulted, which may, in reality, impact negatively on children by reducing opportunities for their voices to be heard, particularly the voices of very young children, when adults do not view children as being sufficiently mature.

Within the debate about whether children are capable of forming and expressing views, Smith (2011) and Kellett (2014) acknowledge that children are often considered to be social actors that are autonomous individuals, and MacNaughton, Hughes and Smith (2007) assert that young children can 'create and communicate valid views about the social world' (p. 164). These views, however, often do not play out in practice, nor do they pertain to all children. For example, young children are often seen as deficient in some regards when compared with adults (Hendrick, 2000; Hammersley, 2017), and we hear of children's voices having been filtered by adults, often well-meaning adults, but their messages are filtered nonetheless (Roberts, 2000; Komulainen, 2007; Lansdown 2010; Bucknall, 2014;). This is particularly true for younger children (Wall, 2017).

The developmentalist view that young children have limited or *no capacity* and are incompetent, irrational, ill-equipped to think for themselves, to articulate or to reason is considered to be outdated. However, the quality and extent of their capacity may still be significantly discounted and those under seven years of age will find their voices even more mediated, translated, or even diluted than those of older children (Clark, 2005). Thus, caution ought to be exerted if we want to ensure that young children's voices are heard, especially if we take Hammersley's (2017) view that 'adult perspectives on children and their worlds must not be treated as authoritative, in the way that is common in society at large' (p. 115). In facilitating the voices of young children, they need to be acknowledged as capable social agents (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998; MacNaughton, et al., 2007; Bacon & Frankel, 2014; Cassidy, 2017), and the ways in which we conceptualise and measure 'capability' need to be reflexively re-examined. Just as the capacity and capability of adults is subject to development, regression, temporary and

permanent change in a complex relationship of internal, social and political factors, so too is the capacity and capability of young children. That the youngest children are marginalized makes this kind of practice inherently political and then their individual marginalization as indigenous, as migrants, or as any socio-economic 'other' exacerbates this marginalization. Voice work becomes in this frame a form of activism. We need to move beyond a simple model of one-way gates in relation to capacity, even though this may make the process of facilitating voice more complicated and time-consuming.

The notion of voice as being insufficient to satisfy the requirements of Article 12 has been highlighted by Lundy (2007). She proposes three features, in addition to voice – space, audience, and influence - also need to be considered. In terms of *space*, opportunities must be provided for children to have the space to consider and share their views, and support should be in place to enable the sharing of views. With regard to Lundy's notion of *audience*, an audience is needed for children's views to be listened to and, crucially, *influence* should result as a consequence of children expressing the views. Lundy's model of voice, space, audience and influence has successfully been incorporated into a range of contexts, including Ireland's National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation and Decision-making 2015-2020 (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015), and the European Commission's work on children's participation and their right to be heard (Day, Percy-Smith, Ruxton, McKenna, Redgrave, Ronicle & Young, 2015).

Acknowledging children's influence and participation positions them as active agents (Shultz & Guimaraes-Iosif, 2012; Horgan, 2017) and as democratic citizens with a role in influencing how, for example, education and other aspects of their lives manifest themselves in their lived experience (Serriere 2010; Mitra et al., 2014). In doing so, we recognise the complexity of their lives, and acknowledge that children's lives extend beyond schooling. Gündoğu and Yildirim (2010) situate the need to engender democracy and rights in the context of early human rights education, and Struthers (2015) proposes that facilitating opportunities for children to practise their rights through being heard and having influence is a way of ensuring that they learn about their human rights.

This article provides a contribution to the theoretical understanding of the affordances and constraints in implementing Article 12 of the UNCRC through an inductively derived framework of eight factors to be considered in practice: *definition*, *power*; *inclusivity*; *listening*; *time and space*; *approaches*; *processes* and *purposes*. These factors all demand attention if young children's voices are to be heard and taken seriously. They are not mutually exclusive and all are likely to be context specific, thus we provide an overview discussion, as well as questions for consideration in the development of practice.

Approach

The eight factors presented here arose from dialogue at the *Look who's talking: Eliciting the voices of children from birth to seven*, international seminar series funded by the University of XXX. This seminar series brought together researchers and practitioners who work with young children (birth to seven) to give and support their 'voices' in respect to different aspects of their lived experiences. The intention was to create a space

for individuals working in this relatively under-developed field to work in a collaborative process, engaging with relevant theory and practice. The aims of the seminars were to move debate forward from where we are on "the journey to a more respectful and meaningful engagement with children" (Lundy, 2018, p.1) through developing guidelines and provocations for practice, and advancing theory and understandings about facilitating and constraining the voices of young children.

The series comprised two seminars, each spanning three and a half days, one in January and one in June 2017. The commitment in the seminars was for open dialogue; this was achieved through creating spaces with minimum structure, in order not to curtail or limit conversations: to predetermine activities and topics would have curtailed the authenticity of the exploratory intent. Although challenging in many ways, it was considered ecologically authentic, as this was a group who had not previously worked together and represented a diversity of contexts, disciplines and approaches to working with young children. The first seminar focused predominantly on mapping the field, sharing and discussing the potential and limitations of experiences and practices. The second was focused on synthesizing our thinking (into guidelines, principles or factors, as communicated in this paper) and extrapolating this thinking for a wider audience.

[APPROXIMATE POSITION OF FIGURE 1]

To support dialogue within and across the two seminars, six months apart, a graphic facilitator, Yyy Yyyyy, was employed, to record the discussion and to free-up the participants to involve themselves as fully as possible in the dialogue. The visual record produced went beyond a partial transcription of the group's dialogue (figure 1). Yyy saw her role as synthesizing the thinking she heard and as the visual minutes emerged in real time, the group had access to a particular form of feedback which provided us with a number of pragmatic and philosophical challenges: what thinking had we made audible?; what had not been heard?; and what had not been expressed?. This tangible record of the ideas presented (see Wall, et al., 2017) was also constructed by Yyy as a connected flow of concepts and this 'outsider's' perspective encouraged us to (re)consider the underlying understandings for these connections. A further value-added outcome of working with the graphic facilitator was the fact that she looked across the visual minutes and produced a summary of the seminars. Her output has been published as *talking point posters* on the project website to be used in schools and nurseries with the intention that they start dialogue between practitioners, children and families (figure 2). They form an output that shares the ideas we outline below in a manner that is designed to be more user-friendly for practitioners. However, they are related to and are intended to operate in dialogue with the theoretical framework discussed in this paper, mirroring key ideas in different ways.

[APPROXIMATE POSITION OF FIGURE 2]

Discussion

The eight factors are discussed in turn. We emphasise again that they are not presented as an answer or recipe, but rather as the starting point to dialogue. We assert that for children's talk to be encouraged, adults have to be engaged in talk too; we anticipate that the questions posed (see Table 1) for each factor will encourage this.

Definition

Consideration needs to be given to the tricky question of what is meant by 'voice'. In the context of this paper, voice is viewed as more than verbal utterances; rather, it allows us to express who we are in ways we choose. To have voice is to make a deliberate statement, an expression of self that is communicated to others in the spirit of democratic or transformative intentions (Fielding, 2004). There is a tendency for definitions in the literature to draw on the relationship that exists between voice and agency or action (Holdsworth, 2000) and to allude to issues of presence, participation and the power of individuals (Cook-Sather, 2006). The overarching trend in relation to facilitating children's voice is to refer to the spoken word, specifically, as part of a dialogue (Rudduck, 2006). When referring to the voices of very young children, those aged 0-7, however, any definition of voice will be, by necessity, broader and more inclusive of a greater range of communication strategies beyond words and cannot exclude: behaviour; actions; pauses in action; silences; body language; glances; movement; and artistic expression. It is not that this range of communication is not apparent in work with older children and young people, but rather that for older children and young people, verbal language is privileged because it is plentiful in most cases. Given that very young children do not or cannot verbalise sentences and have limited vocabulary, it is necessary to attend to other ways in which voice might manifest itself. To problematise openly what might be considered as voice opens up the potential of more ways of eliciting and facilitating voice and of engaging with young children's voices. Indeed, the innovation and creativity needed to capture voice from birth has great potential to benefit the practices used with older children and young people.

Voice is context specific. It depends on the individuals and with whom they are interacting, when that interaction is happening, the impetus for the exchange and the level of familiarity with working in this way. The dispositions and competencies of all individuals engaged will be dynamically influential, as will the changing nature of the space in which they are operating (Taylor & Robinson, 2009). Thus, for individual practitioners, a reflexive collaboration to unpick and define what they currently mean by voice is a valuable support to their practice. This is unlikely to be a neat definition or something that will remain constant over time, but in working to advance children's voices some consideration needs to be given to *what* is being facilitated. Once a working definition has been agreed, continued dialogue with adults including practitioners, carers and children to deliberate the dilemmas and tensions inherent in eliciting voice is an important stage in ensuring young children's voices are cultivated, while also helping to ensure that support for eliciting voices becomes embedded in practice.

We are aware of the controversy courted by using the term voice (Robinson & Taylor, 2007; Arnot & Reay, 2007) and recognise any critique is exacerbated by our focus on children who may be pre-verbal or have emergent language (Smith, 2011). We maintain

the term for a number of reasons. Predominant is the fact that as a group we struggled to agree on an alternative; 'perspectives' (Clark, 2005; Harcourt, Perry & Waller, 2011) was considered and, indeed, is favoured by some, but was felt to lack the commitment to action and communication embodied in the practices many of us see and use (Komulainen, 2007). Just as important, was the fear of disconnecting early years practice from wider student voice agendas (Wall, 2017) and, aligned to this, our commitment to applying the UNCRC (United Nations, 1989) equally across all age groups of children.

Power

Power inhabits all social processes but is not equally available to all, with groups and individuals having different levels of access to various forms of communicative and institutional power. When considering how to facilitate young children's voices, the power imbalance that exists between young children and adults needs to be acknowledged. In the context of adult-child relationships, the power held by the adults can be seen to present itself in two key ways. Firstly, adults can overtly demonstrate their position of relative power in the relationship through assertive behaviours in the form of dominance or manipulation, and through displaying their authority over young children (Robinson, 2011). Secondly, and often less visible, the power held by adults can be ingrained within the micro-processes at play within settings attended by young children (Ibid.). Different elements of power operate simultaneously, and at different levels within these settings and work to position young children as the less powerful. Giroux (1983) asserts that it is the unstated norms, values and beliefs embedded within systems and transited through structures, routines and social relationships that lead to positioning children as powerless. With this in mind, consideration needs to be given to disrupting the ways in which young children are socialised into accepting the authoritative positions of adults, especially in settings such as schools and pre-schools where adults are perceived to hold positions of power when compared to children. Thus, if we are to support the facilitation of young children's voices, it is important to recognise where the power lies within adult-child relationships.

If young children are to be supported to 'have a voice' efforts must be made to break down, or at least to recognise, situations where the internalised unstated assumptions young children may hold which positions them as lacking power when compared to adults. A culture needs to be created which is both supportive and enabling in age-appropriate ways for all children. Similarly, adults in the same context must be alert to their own assumptions about this power relationship and should be aware of how they position children in relation to themselves. We must also acknowledge, however, that children, including very young children, exert power and can influence and manipulate situations to fulfil their own goals, desires, wishes and needs, and that they, too can disrupt the power dynamic between adults and children. In addition to power being imbued within adult-child relationships, power also permeates relationships between children themselves, and this can serve to facilitate and constrain, the voices of some young children.

Inclusivity

Inclusion assumes that everyone has an equal voice. While this egalitarian view is advocated in international policy (United Nations, 1989; UNESCO, 1994), understandings of inclusion are 'partly shaped by shifting social, economic and political circumstances' (Black-Hawkins, 2010, p. 21). In promoting an inclusive approach to children's voice, it is crucial to bear the socio-economic and political context in mind. The promotion of inclusion is a political act. Further, it is an ethical stance; one that recognises the importance and value of all.

The notion of inclusivity allows for all children, regardless of their chronological age, to be viewed and engaged with as competent actors and holders of rights. Although the UNCRC offers the caveat that children's views ought to be given due weight according to their age and maturity, it is important to bear in mind the notion of voice advocated here, that voice is an expression of self and that it extends beyond the verbal or the airing of views and opinions. While inclusivity pertains to an approach that ensures all children, regardless of age or socio-economic background, have opportunities to express their voice, it also applies to what is considered to be voice and to what children might express through their voices. This is particularly pertinent when working with very young children.

There may be some groups of children whose voices are not as equal as others. For example, these groups might include children with additional support needs that are both physical and cognitive, those with cultural and ethnic differences to the dominant group around them, and often those from low socio-economic backgrounds. These groups are at risk of not being listened to, or even invited to contribute, due to their 'otherness'. As Youdell (2006) notes when a child is defined by the 'multiple constellation' of a number of these factors, the added element of being a young child may lead to exacerbating diminished opportunities to be heard.   In promoting an inclusive approach to voice, we must attend carefully to ensure that this is not the case.

In an inclusive setting, all voices and forms of voice are valued. This will require practitioners to consider their own preconceptions, explore alternative means of hearing those 'voices', accept when children choose to 'opt out' of voice and see a diverse range of approaches for enhancing participation. To be truly inclusive, the practitioner must be politically literate in order to recognise that all children, including those traditionally viewed as too young, too disabled or too disengaged, have a voice. In addition, a culture of compassion that welcomes and supports alternative voices reinforces notions of inclusivity. The challenge for practitioners is to seek out the means by which they might facilitate and listen to all voices and have equal regard for those voices and the influence they may have.

Listening

Listening is vital in endeavouring to support children's voice. We have chosen to use the term voice to imply an act of two-way communication, even if that conversation is non-verbal on behalf of one or more participants. A culture that is supportive of communication of all types and at all levels embeds voice as a right for all (Mitra, 2003). The role and reactions of the individual or individuals being communicated with

therefore becomes of great importance. Listening is an active and responsive process, which relies on tuning in to voices (Glazzard, 2012) and the myriad ways voice can be communicated (Clark, 2007). The listener should provide recognition that voices have been heard and share their intent in engaging with the communication (Mitra, 2008) by asking themselves why they are listening to these contributions.

The listener should be supportive of different ways of expression and be ready to facilitate speaking and listening in creative ways. This is arguably more important with those learning to develop their voice. As children develop agency to have their own voice, then the person with whom they are communicating acts as a voice role model (Wall & Hall, 2016). Their responses to the child's utterances may reinforce the child's behaviours and dispositions as they investigate and understand their role in society. As such, listening is a skill that needs to be taught to practitioners and to children (Wall, 2012). Listeners need to be open to many different types of voices and attuned to the different ways that voice can manifest - voices should not have to be loud to be heard.

There is a relational aspect between the speaker and listener (Mannion, 2007). The importance of reciprocity depends on the skills and dispositions of all the individuals engaged in the conversation. Arguably, for children who are pre-verbal or have emergent language, this role of the listener, that is the role of the adult or peer and the support they provide, is of great importance in communicating with and for the child, possibly as mediator or advocate, giving the child's voice agency within different situations. If voice is active and unfettered (Pascal & Bertram, 2009), then listening may not be a cosy process for the adult or child (Lundy, 2007), and is likely to involve a level of challenge, especially if authenticity is to be optimised. Thus, time dedicated to voice should include the consideration of understandings relating to safe and brave spaces for both speaker and listener (Cook-Sather, 2016).

Time and space
The design, practice and review of a setting's formal and informal structures should allow space and time for children's voices. While the pressures under which practitioners are working needs to be acknowledged, the value of 'voice work' in creating environments and practices that develop patience and curiosity for and by children and adults should be foregrounded.

Everything we do as educators has some value but not everything we do is the same kind of activity (Arendt, 1958; Higgins, 2010a, b); it is our job to question what we are giving priority to. Educators do not intend to fill learning spaces with so much activity and bustle that there is no room for the learner to speak. Neither do they design a curriculum that advocates that discussion should be avoided, that activities must move apace, that understanding has not been achieved or that children all produce the same piece of work. It is in the positive environment of making time and space for voice that it is likely to flourish.

Voices can flourish in a number of places and times. Building for this is less like major urban planning and more like building dens: flexible and adaptable to context and actors;

they can be abandoned if unused, or elaborated and extended if valued. We must recognise and cherish the spaces and places carved out by children for child-child voice; and sometimes these spaces and places can be copied but they should not be colonized. In choosing tools we need to consider their potential as well as their obvious or intended use. Tools in Dewey's (1938) terms are technologies designed to make an opportunity for voice different: faster, slower, richer, more focused, more efficient, or more sustained. Tools change or re-shape the semiotic frame for an activity (Wall & Higgins, 2006), carrying with them the rules for how they are used. As Dewey (1938) asserts, 'A tool is also a mode of language, for it says something to those who understand it, about the operations of use and their consequences' (p. 46). The 'modes of language' that young children employ require space but they also require time to evolve, to be articulated, to be sought and to be understood. Only in affording time for the evolution, articulation and recognition of voice can it be understood and advanced to have influence. For young children's voices to have influence, then there must also be someone listening in the space where the voices are shared.

Approaches

Open dispositions support voice. In being receptive to a wide range of practices there is more likelihood that there will be greater opportunities for young children's participation. It is worth noting that deciding not to participate is an expression of voice (Mills, 2017) and that the approaches adopted in practice should be open to this. The decision not to speak is also a form of voice, as is going away and sitting under a table. The use of gaze, gesture and posture are part of a fundamental 'dance' (Winnicott, 1968) in which we all communicate from birth. Re-tuning into this communication enables educators to take a broader view of voice and to value and facilitate the forms of voice offered as well as the forms expected.

The range of voices to be heard is to be welcomed, and if voices are more diverse, then the ways in which we can successfully communicate also become more numerous and interesting, suggesting that we have to adapt our ideas about what positive impact could look, feel and sound like. Approaches ought to be flexible and meaningful for all participants, but especially for the young children whose voices are to be heard. In determining approaches to eliciting and facilitating voice, practitioners need to be reflective about their practices and be strategic in designing approaches for the most positive impact. It is important to bear in mind, too, that we are only really able to give permissions freely for things we ourselves are permitted to do. It is unlikely that we enjoy perfect communication and unfettered voice, so also exploring the practitioner's voice is fundamental to building a voice community.

There will be times when we use strategy in the service of a performative goal, perhaps to encourage a particular group or child to contribute. At other times, we might use strategy in the service of an emotional need, to keep ourselves and/or the children in a place of familiarity and safety or to move deliberately into new, exciting and scary territory (Hodgkin, 1988). How we use our knowledge of ourselves and the children to explore the voice Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978) is the basis of an ethical and relational strategy.

Processes

While the approaches adopted pertain to the individuals within the context, processes are the structures and conditions under which they work. The structures should provide opportunities for consultation, collaboration and dialogue in order to facilitate the reflective and strategic action mentioned above. Processes should be dynamic and have a forward momentum that aim towards ensuring voices are effectively enabled.

Processes involve a directed focus on how to draw attention to power imbalances and to find ways to embolden and encourage young children to share leadership. Research shows that adult advocates can signal shared power through how they demonstrate their intention to create the process of work (Cook-Sather, 2006).

It is important, in eliciting young children's voices that trust and respect are cultivated. A growing body of research indicates the need to establish respect and trust between adults and children (Mitra, 2009; Zeldin, Camino, & Mook, 2005). This culture should include opportunities for strengths-based dialogue and shared, accessible language for group conversations. Bearing in mind the broad definition of voice offered above, the processes must take account of language in its varied forms, particularly for the pre-verbal child and for those whose spoken language is developing. Within the safe spaces established in working with young children, open lines of communication, whatever form it takes, must be given priority.

A sense of shared ownership grows when children's voice initiatives encourage group members to experiment with a variety of roles, including being a critical thinker, a teacher, a learner, a peacemaker, a supporter, a facilitator, and a documenter (Zeldin, Camino, Calvert, & Ivey, 2002; Denner, Meyer, & Bean, 2005). Rather than creating an expectation of equal roles, flatter structures, instead, encourage the spirit of shared responsibility and reciprocal respect through mutual understanding. Celebrating the successes of children and adults in the early years context is fairly straightforward, yet meaningful to the group members. This can yield a visible victory (McLaughlin, 1993; Mitra et al., 2010) that can boost group morale and also establish the credibility of the group in the broader context. A school assembly, posters, having outside officials attend meetings, and media coverage are examples of visible victories. Such celebrations can create credibility for group activities and a sense of common identity and confidence among group members.

Purposes

It is vital to consider why we promote children's voices and what such practice fosters. Adults' authority and responsibilities will not be undermined by doing so. It is important that children's capacities for involvement in decision-making are recognised in facilitating children's voice and broader participation. Tokenism can be avoided by having a clear purpose or goal for the promotion of children's voices. The facilitation of voices, therefore, is contingent upon how we conceptualise and practise it.

As posited earlier, the contemporary view of childhood regards children beyond the dominant developmental psychology and socialisation theories and gives equal importance to being, becoming and belonging (Papatheodorou, 2010). Children are beings in the present, who are capable of creating their own cultures (Papatheodorou, 2010). With the changing view of childhood, it is important that we change the culture of communication, too. Developing a community of voices necessitates a culture of consistent listening, hearing, understanding and action. Voice often demands time, and listening needs tuning-in. An action, even if it is about closing a loop of communication or explaining to children what can or cannot be done as a result of voice, is important.

A conceptualisation of voice which guides practice helps provide a clear purpose of working more democratically and collaboratively with children (Gündoğu & Yildirim, 2010). Without having a clear purpose, we run the risk of supporting and reproducing broader inequalities and subjectivities in the society, and this works against inclusivity. The argument that voice initiatives can deepen and favour western middle-class values (Vandenbroeck & Bourverne-De Bie, 2006), for example, by paying more attention to 'verbal' voice and favouring voice as a vehicle for children to display more self-regulation and individual self- assertion, will only reproduce inequalities. Voice, therefore, ought to be conceptualised through a collective lens, for example, as involvement in collaborative processes requiring negotiation and recognition of the needs of others (Raby, 2014). This conceptualisation and negotiation can also include children. This kind of collaborative endeavour, that brings assumptions or biases into the open, will promote and foster a view of voice which is both individual and relational. It will also help to overcome the critique of age, skills and class-based inequalities which may only reward middle-class 'voicing' and parenting skills (Black, 2011).

Reciprocity in voice, between adults and children and also amongst children themselves, is important. This can be promoted through the use of more creative ways of listening and talking, establishing trust and giving time to children to form and express themselves using a variety of means and methods (Kanyal & Gibbs, 2014). Establishing common goals and purposes, built on the principles of reciprocity, therefore help to advance children's voices, and lend themselves to be used in a variety of situations, for example, whilst planning, evaluating or instigating change.

[APPROXIMATE POSITION OF TABLE 1]

Conclusion

We propose that by outlining factors and posing questions in this way we are providing the foundation for translating the recommendations of the UNCRC Article 12, with respect to the right to voice, into practice for young children. These eight factors: Definition; Power; Inclusivity; Listening; Time and Place; Approaches; Processes; and Purposes, work in harmony to prompt questions and thinking for all those who work with and for children. Such work, we assert, should be undertaken in such a way as to ensure that the dialogue is on-going, adapting to the children's and adults' growing competence and confidence. The elicitation of voice, therefore, requires a dialogue that is receptive to

the contexts and individuals involved; this dialogue obviously should include children. The dialogue ought to involve people interacting with one another, but also with the concepts featured in the eight factors. While each factor may be considered individually, it is also important that they are treated as inter-connected and inter-dependent. For example, listening is vital in eliciting voice, action will not be meaningful if due thought and dialogue does not take place in relation to defining voice itself or if there is no commitment to voice embedded in practice, thereby guaranteeing that time and space for voice is in place.

By introducing the series of questions to accompany each of the factors (Table 1), we suggest that adults should not be afraid to shape the agenda by adopting an enquiring stance. In doing so, they need to give careful consideration to the implications for their intentions, actions and the context in which they and the children are situated. This requires not only a commitment to the voices of children, but to voices amongst adults, paying deliberate attention to their own voices as professionals. In effect, we would advocate that the approach proposed here for working with children is also adopted by the adults working around them. The eight factors, though generated for use in eliciting young children's voices, work well in other circumstances where voice is to be supported. We see a mutually reinforcing and beneficial process, whereby the children and adults model different facets of voice, learning from each other and by building understanding about what is encompassed by each of these factors within their context.

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