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Young Persons' Rights to Influence Learning in their Everyday Lives

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Abstract: Informal and everyday learning is becoming a prominent focus for educational and psychological research because of the increasing value it holds

in informing theories of human development relative to diverse sociocultural contexts. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that every child has the right to have their views given due weight in all matters that affect them, including learning. Due to ambiguous conceptualisations of the meanings of the phrases within Article 12, the provisions have not been understood or fully enacted by signatory countries to the UNCRC, including Aotearoa New Zealand. This qualitative study explored ten young people's (13–15 years) perspectives and lived experiences of how they engage with and influence their decisions around what they learn when they are not at school. A thematic analysis identified two overarching and interconnected themes 'relationships' and 'identity'. The findings show that young people influence their decisions around learning through intent participation with others, embedded within the interacting ecological systems of their sociocultural environments. In this way, they expanded their perspectives and developed knowledge and skills in areas of interest to become self-determining individuals. The research suggests that for Article 12 to be fully understood and enacted, young people's unique participation in their everyday lives can be better utilised in formal learning contexts. Implications for educators include the importance of building on young people's diverse sociocultural backgrounds to inform learning, and to address power imbalance issues between adults and young people so that their voices are heard and given due weight in educational contexts.

Keywords: children's rights, participation, informal learning, student voice/ pupil

voice, UNCRC

Introduction

Young people participate in, and contribute to all aspects of society afforded to adults, yet have traditionally been positioned as an uninformed, irrational, incompetent and a vulnerable uniform group (Cassidy, Conrad, & de Figueiroa-Rego, 2020; Hammersley, 2017). Increasingly, young people are being understood to be social agents, thinkers, and expert informants about their own lives (Christensen & James, 2017). In Professor Laura Lundy's (2007) seminal paper "Voice is not enough", she argues that 'cosy' phrases commonly used in reference to the article such as 'pupil voice' and 'student voice' diminish its impact. Furthermore, Lundy (2007) identified several barriers to implementing Article 12 such as the cooperation of adults, limited awareness of the provision, and the marginalisation of young people. Subsequently, the provisions of Article 12 have not been understood or enacted in its entirety by United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) signatory countries around the world. This is a particular concern for the field of education given that young people spend a large majority of their time in formal learning contexts; an environment that should facilitate young people's capacity to develop and share their views, have them listened to, and given due weight to support their development as flourishing members of society.

Lundy (2007) developed a framework of participation to better conceptualise the ambiguous meanings of the phrases encapsulated within the

Article to support policy makers, educators, and ultimately young people themselves, in fulfilling their right to participate in decision making processes on matters that concern them. This framework incorporates four key integrated areas for conceptualising Article 12 including 'space' (access to participation), 'voice' (children being facilitated to form and express their views), 'audience' (children's voices being listened to), and 'influence' (children's views being acted on). The model focuses the influential decision-makers on the distinct, albeit interrelated, elements of Article 12 that can only be understood in conjunction with other relevant UNCRC provisions. In essence, Lundy's model places emphasis on taking action to understand and enact children's rights.

The concept of participation has mostly been researched in formal learning settings (Horgan, Forde, Martin & Parkes, 2017). Informal and everyday learning is becoming a prominent focus for educational and psychological research because of the increasing value it holds in informing theories of human development relative to the ever-changing sociocultural contexts of society. Given that young people are spending more time learning outside of school, than within school, developing perspective around how they engage with and influence their decisions around what they learn in their everyday lives is needed to understand the pragmatic realities of Article 12. Informed by Laura Lundy's (2007) notion that having a 'voice is not enough' for the provisions of Article 12 of the UNCRC to be realised in full, exploration of the question "how do young people engage with learning, and influence their decisions around what they learn when they are not at school?" highlighted several issues surrounding young

people's right to participate in decision making processes in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Background to the study

Every young person around the world has a right to have their voice heard and given due weight on all matters that affect them (Lundy, 2007). In 1993 Aotearoa New Zealand became a signatory to the UNCRC. This meant the government is now legally accountable and responsible for ensuring that all young people are not discriminated against, that decisions made concerning them are in their the best interests, that they have everything they need to survive, develop, feel protected, and are able to participate in all matters that concern them (Unicef, 2020). The children's right agenda and the professions of education and psychology stand to benefit from increased academic attention towards understanding how learners make sense of their world in everyday and informal contexts to ensure children are effectively and respectfully supported by adults in their lives.

As a signatory country to the UNCRC, gaining the perspectives of young New Zealander's is imperative to conceptualising how Article 12 is understood and enacted in Aotearoa New Zealand and to inform international comparative research. The study aimed to hear and include ten New Zealand young people's voices aged between 13 and 15 years authentically by emphasising their views, opinions and ideas in an illustrative narrative that captured the essence of their perspectives regarding their influence over informal learning and participation (Cassidy et al., 2020).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UNCRC is a human rights treaty that was adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession in 1989 (Unicef, 2020). It proposes that every child, regardless of diversity or unique differences, has fundamental human rights that are essential for their personal development. The UNCRC is governed by four principles that support interpretation of the articles. Namely, nondiscrimination, the best interests of the child, survival, development and protection, and participation (Unicef, 2020). The 54 articles of the Convention are conducive to the civil, political, economic, educational, social, health and cultural rights of children and young people (Unicef, 2020). Signatories to the treaty are obliged to do their utmost to protect children (Human Rights Commission, 2010). The New Zealand government ratified the UNCRC in March 1993 making New Zealand legally accountable and responsible for ensuring that every child has everything they need to survive, grow, participate, and reach their potential (Unicef, 2020).

Article 12 recognises children as full human beings who have integrity, personality, and the ability to participate freely in society (Lundy, 2007). Since the ratification of the discursive framework, academic thinking, discourse, political interest, and commitment to advocating for children and their rights has grown. Signatory countries have gradually subsumed Article 12 into policy and legislation which has increased emphasis on children's right to participate and actively discuss their views in all matters that affect them (Bourke &

O'Neill, 2018). The growing interest in research on student participation at school is connected with improved outcomes regarding wellbeing, self-esteem, decisionmaking, academic success, life skills, safety and protection, social status, democratic skills, citizenship, student-adult relationships, school ethos, agency, belonging, and competence (Anderson, Graham & Thomas, 2019). Subsequently, student-centred pedagogies, principles and approaches that were popular in the past (e.g., Dewey, 1918) are being re-experienced in contemporary educational developments and reforms that centre student voice (Bourke & O'Neill, 2021).

Despite the increased consensus of the importance of student participation, having a 'voice' is not enough for young people to be acknowledged and recognised as functioning members of society (Groundwater-Smith, 2016; Lundy, 2007). For example, in the United Kingdom, legislation and policy requires schools to actively seek and listen to the views of pupils (Hill et al., 2016). However, children's rights have been ignored and underplayed as a result of listening to 'pupil voice' which negates the entirety of the provisions of the article to be fully implemented (Lundy, 2007). In Canada, there has been a drive towards actualising 'student voice' through activities such as student representation groups to inform policy development (Groundwater-Smith, 2016). Although, these have been regarded as tokenistic and fuelled by hidden agendas due to power imbalances which deny space for children's rights to be enacted (Groundwater-Smith, 2016).

Bourke, O'Neill, and Loveridge (2018) found that children's conceptions of learning in everyday contexts vary in sophistication across different categories including culture, relationships, identity, strategies, purpose, and affect/emotion (the CRISPA framework). Callanan, Cervantes, and Loomis (2011) also argue that informal learning can be highly socially collaborative, and embedded in meaningful activity. Informal learning is identified as non-didactic, initiated by the learner's interest or choice and not externally assessed (Callanan et al., 2011). Hedegaard's (2012) conceptual analysis suggests that children learn through the demands they meet and through the demands they put on others as they interact across and within different social settings and activities in diverse institutions. The social constructionist perspective supports Hedegaard's (2012) notion that children are social agents capable of shaping their own lives and in turn the lives of those around them including society (Horgan et al., 2017; Wood, 2016).

Participation in learning

Participation plays a vital role in identity formation as it is developed in social practice (Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, Cain, 1998). Rogoff (2003) emphasised the role of participation in transforming both individuals and cultural communities, stating that they "mutually create each other" (p. 37), resonant with Hedegaard's (2012) argument that factors connected to the sociocultural conditions of individuals concurrently influence children and communities. Contemporary views of learning incorporate participation and reflect a relational conceptual understanding that foregrounds collaboration and meaningful activity (Horgan et al., 2017). In some ways, research on young people's influence over

their learning in formal education settings supports prominent participation ideology. For example, Holdsworth's (2000) work on citizenship and education emphasises students having a valued and recognised role within school governance and curriculum. Mannion, Sowerby and l'Anson's (2015) research highlights children's value of autonomy and the importance of good relationships for participation in school to support achievement and attainment. Anderson, Graham and Thomas' (2019) Student Participation Scale encapsulates important elements of participation identified by students including working together, having voice about schooling, having a say with influential people at school, having voice about activities outside the classroom, having influence, and having choice. However, a lot of research has aimed to conceptualise participation of students in terms of educational research. Examples include Hart's (1997) ladder of participation, Holdsworth's (2000) student participation ladder, Shier's (2001) five pathways to participation and Mitra's (2006) pyramid of student voice. These models outline facets of participation in hierarchically structured frameworks and place students in different roles from being researched 'on' through to becoming research partners (Anderson et al., 2019).

While these studies highlight essential components of participation and encourage shared understandings of participation, they reveal several limitations of student participation in educational contexts. For example, the idea of students becoming active in their learning creates tension because it confronts traditional teaching practice (Holdsworth, 2000); young people have more opportunity to participate in decision making, power sharing, and linking with their communities

through participation (Mannion, Sowerby & l'Anson's, 2015). The concept of participation is complex, multifaceted and understood differently across sociocultural contexts (Anderson et al., 2019).

Furthermore, research (e.g., Anderson et al., 2019; Holdsworth, 2000; Mannion et al., 2015) fails to evidence learning through participation. It remains unclear if all the provisions of Article 12 are being fulfilled because participation is assumed to be something that children experience or learn in formal contexts which accentuates the power imbalance between adults and children in decisionmaking processes. Quantifying participation exemplifies how institutions value student voice in terms of statistical significance to please political agendas. How the data is disseminated and used to benefit the students should be the priority.

Out-of-school learning: understanding the subcultures

Translating the essential characteristics of participation across contexts is difficult because communities are increasingly diverse. However, having the space, voice, audience, and influence for young people to participate in all matters that affect them is every child's right and must be acknowledged regardless of context (Lundy, 2007). Horgan, Forde, Martin and Parkes (2017) discourage generalisations of participation, emphasising the interdependency between children's participation, their sociocultural environment and complex social realities of their everyday lives. Moving away from dominant performative definitions of participation, the authors argue that 'lived' participation must

acknowledge how children interact with and influence their daily lives (Horgan et al., 2017). Research into youth subcultures emphasises the diversity of participation in the everyday lives of young people (Petroni, 2010). Petroni's (2010) study into power relations within a skateboarding community highlights how participation influences learning through the navigation of symbolic, social, and ideological tensions within a community of practice. Hedegaard (2012) also supports the idea that tension and conflict between demands of more capable participants in an activity setting and an individual's intentions or motives informs learning and development. It is evident that participation and learning cannot be generalised because they are complex phenomena's that continuously evolve relative to the social and cultural environment.

Research with Young People

The inclusion of young people's voices in social research has increased in recent decades, specifically around the issue of how children should be positioned and included in research (Cook-Sather, 2014). Traditionally, the views of childhood and young people's everyday lives and experiences have been explored, analysed, edited, and sanitised under the guise of adult interpretations and understandings of these views (Christensen & James, 2017). Adult perspectives that have adopted a deficit conception of children have excluded young people from the research process rendering them as objects of inquiry to satisfy adult agendas (O'Reilly, Ronzoni, & Dogra, 2013). Subsequently, young people have been perceived as an irrational, incompetent and vulnerable uniform group (Cassidy, Conrad, & de Figueiroa-Rego, 2020; Hammersley, 2017).

The current study

A total of ten participants were recruited for this qualitative study to ensure thorough and credible information elicited insight into the lived experiences of the participants. Three school Principals from secondary schools were contacted by email providing a written explanation of the research. One school agreed and communicated the details of the research to students in Year 10. Ten pupils were invited to participate and ten agreed to take part. Participants were aged between 13 and 15 years. The individual interviews were audio-recorded involving the ten female students.

A qualitative approach was used to explore the social and contextual experiences of participants with regards informal learning, decision making and their rights. Semi-structured interviews were utilised as the primary data source to elicit rich, holistic and inferential information to respectfully describe the meaning of the participants lived experiences of participation and informal learning. Due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic occurring at the time of the research, Aotearoa New Zealand went into lockdown in March 2020 (all schools closed), and students participated in home learning over the course of four weeks. The extenuating circumstances of the COVID-19 Lockdown is relevant to the current research because the formal and informal learning contexts for the participants became integrated as they were expected to continue their formal education in their home environment. Subsequently, a question connected to learning during the COVID-19 Lockdown was included in the semi-structured interview schedule.

Thematic analysis was applied to identify and analyse patterns and repeated meanings across the data set to inform the interpretation of the participants perspectives on how they influence their learning when they are not at school. Braun and Clarke's (2013) six phases of thematic analysis were applied including familiarisation with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and writing up. This systematic and deliberate inductive method provided a structured procedure to coding and theme development. Ethical guidelines support the aims of research to produce knowledge and truth and serve as mechanisms of protection against harm and exploitation for the participants involved during the research process (O'Reilly, Ronzoni, & Dogra, 2013). A low risk ethics application was completed and approved from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (Ethics Notification Number: 4000022296).

Trustworthiness of research entails that criteria and strategies are employed throughout the research process to ensure systematic rigour of the research design, credibility of the researcher, believability of the research findings and applicability of the research methods (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Four sets of criteria were used to establish the trustworthiness of a piece of qualitative research including credibility through the technique of thick, rich data (Rose & Johnson, 2020), transformability through rich description dependability by triangulating techniques of close peer monitoring throughout the research process, and confirmability was achieved through reflexivity by clarifying researcher bias.

Findings

Two key themes: 'relationships' and 'identity', emerged. Combined, these constructed the participants' experiences of their learning and decision-making when they are not at school. The overarching themes of relationships and identity are interconnected. The relationships the participants have with others influences their choices for personal pathways and supports their growth in developing understandings of perspectives that are different to their own. In turn, this supports the participants in becoming self-determining individuals. Therefore, the interconnected themes of relationships and identity are conducive to how the participants influence the decisions around what they learn when they are not at school. By altering the varying aspects of their peers support, understanding different perspectives and creating choices, they also change the connections between relationships and identity.

Relationships

Relationships was one of the overarching themes that explained how young people engage with learning and influence their decisions around what they learn when they are not at school. All participants constructed relationships in several ways, which were for the most part largely positive. Support from more knowledgeable others in their lives was important for all the participants. Through others' support they were able to learn through observation and participation in different activities relative to their interests and familial experiences. For example, Joy described how the established trust with her parents nurtured her knowledge and skill development connected to her interest in working on the family farm.

We kind of get some instructions and then the adults just leave us to do it cos they know we won't quite mess it up that badly. We've seen it since we were little, sitting on the back of the motorbike with our parents driving us around pointing stuff out and we just pick it up. (Joy).

All the participants reflected that their choices for personal pathways were influenced by their family and peer interests as well as positive affect responses because of involvement in different communities. For example, Louise's experience of learning on the farm alongside her father has supported her interest in developing her own flock of sheep.

I've got my own ewe's and a flock, and my dad is helping me sort out the year on the sheep calendar which is helping me basically sort all of the sheep and everything. I'd always loved doing that and we set up a plan and dad will teach me things along the way. (Louise)

Finally, understanding different perspectives was an underlying pattern reflected by all participants to support their development of communication skills and understanding of how other people live in comparison with their own lives. For example, Laura described that she was interested in joining the Student Volunteer Army because it would support her in developing collaboration skills she perceived as important for working with peers at school.

They're (people in elderly care) quite interesting. Like you just hear about their lives and you can get some advice from them, they teach

you stuff. If you're volunteering or something you have to interact with people and get along and you know just figure out how people work and I think that helps in the class if you have to like work together and stuff. You have to learn to engage with people. There are lots of different people with different beliefs and they might have different lifestyles you could say. It probably makes you more open-minded in a way as well. (Laura)

Identity

Identity is the second overarching theme that explained how young people engage with learning and influence their decisions around what they learn when they are not at school. The participants constructed identity through their developing understanding of the supports and restraints that influence who they are becoming which underscores the decisions they make in how they engage with learning. For example, Lulu reflected an urge to be exposed to different experiences to ensure she is prepared for the challenges young people face today.

A lot of people say, oh that's not for you, you're still young. And I feel like we should learn it at a young age because the earlier you learn it the more, how much easier it will be to react to the situation later in life. Or just deal with it. Because I feel like the stuff we are

experiencing now, they only experienced it in their twenties. It's much beneficial for us to learn about it at a young age. (Lulu)

Becoming self-determining was emphasised by the participants' awareness of the moral obligations instilled in them through the different communities they are a part of. Laura highlights how the participants constructed self-determination as being influenced by those around them while encapsulating a view that they have choice in what learning they take from their participation within different communities.

Probably like with your morals. You know because obviously you've got certain values that you live by or believe in like it's not as you know, totally traditional, you don't go out and do every single thing they (parents) do but you take what you think is right and do it. Like being respectful and things, perseverance and stuff like that. (Laura)

Finally, understanding different perspectives contributed to the identity formation of the participants which in turn influenced their choices for personal pathways. For example, Rachel wants to "become a script writer, that's my main goal," which supports her involvement in the local drama league. Laura aspires to consistently 'get on the court' so she understands she needs to be fit to ensure she is chosen on the team: "If you want to be on the team you've got to do the work and so you know what to do, you want to be playing, it's not much fun watching." Such comments exemplify why young people engage in learning and

make decisions around what they learn when they are not at school because they are thinking about who they want to become.

For the participants, learning through intent participation with others was conducive to their engagement in everyday learning. Similar Rogoff's (2014) understanding of learning by observing and pitching in (LOPI), the participants emphasised collaborating with more knowledgeable others through participation in meaningful learning alongside them to achieve mutual goals (Bourke et al, 2018; Callanan et al, 2011). The collaborative process of learning alongside a more knowledgeable person who recognises and supports the participant's development is shown in these results. The findings suggest that assessment through the form of immediate and ongoing feedback is relative to everyday learning consistent Callanan et al's (2011) notion of informal learning not being externally assessed because it occurs in the moment relative to the participant's ZPD. Furthermore, like the findings of Rogoff (2014), timely assessment through feedback during the endeavour contributes to both the endeavour and the participants feelings of acceptance, appreciation, or correction of the efforts as productive contributions. Overall, the participants engagement in learning outside of school was influenced through collaborative participation with others that supported their contribution to the different communities they are a part of because they felt acknowledged, respected and motivated to engage with and develop throughout a learning process.

The findings of the study demonstrate how relationships within young people's sociocultural environment interact and influence decision-making, engagement and identity formation reflecting a deep connection between culture and cognition. Consistent with Hedegaard's (2012) view that young people are social agents capable of shaping their own lives and the lives of those around them including society, this study foregrounded these connections of time, space and people within these young people's lives. Similar to Callanan et al's (2011) notion that participating in diverse learning experiences through collaboration with others plays an important role in supporting the development of appropriate social and cultural behaviour, the participants described embodying characteristics, morals, and beliefs from others to develop their own identities through observation and immersion within different groups. Complimenting Petrone's (2010) argument that tension and conflict are conducive to understanding social norms and ideals of groups within a microsystem, participant's sought out exosystemic influences that presented ideas that would challenge the ideals of their communities. For example, engaging with different media such as 'Tiktok', international texts and musicals with underlying themes distinct from the participants own sociocultural worlds, such as illegal drug taking, abuse, and sexual assault references, allowed them to express autonomy, difference and distinction to mainstream society to create meaningful worlds for them to participate in. However, the participants perceived their parents and teachers to view these as distractions, obstacles or negative influences on learning and behaviour. Overall, the findings reflect the complexity of the

interacting relationships within a young person's sociocultural environment and the associated challenges they impart on individual development.

Intent participation with others embedded within the interacting ecological systems of the participants sociocultural environments allowed them to expand their perspectives to become self-determining individuals, reiterating the relational nature of learning that foregrounds social interaction as a vital component of developing preparedness for life (Freeman & Mathison, 2009; Rogoff, 2014). Consistent with Petrone's (2010) argument that power relations within a community influences learning by creating understandings around the norms of participation, the participants shared experiences of tension and conflict which taught them more about the social expectations of their friends and parents. For the most part, the participants autonomy was supported, however, three participants reported that they felt misunderstood or held back from pursuing topics of interest because of their age. The findings of this study suggest that young people, if afforded the opportunity to become selfdetermining, despite their perceived readiness assumed by adults, choose to become involved in diverse social settings that extend beyond their sociocultural environment to develop understanding of other people's lives to ensure their preparedness for life. These findings are consistent with Lundy's (2007) notion that young people have not been recognised as full human beings with integrity, personality and the ability to make informed decisions regarding their participation in different learning experiences. Subsequently, young people are denied their right to influence their decisions around learning because their unique forms of

participation are neglected based on misunderstood representations of their capacity to participate in society as full human beings.

Thus, their ability to become self-determining individuals is in some cases restricted by adults.

Developing knowledge and skills in areas of interest was identified by the participants as a contributing factor to participation in different communities. The participants' articulated an awareness of the various demands placed upon them due to societal expectations to achieve well at school and recognised that their involvement in different groups complimented their formal learning experiences and supported academic achievement. The findings suggest that young people integrate their interests to support achievement in formal learning contexts. The COVID-19 Lockdown period presented a unique opportunity for the participants to reflect on how they balance social expectations and interests. The dichotomy between informal and formal learning was exaggerated through this process because they were forced to balance school expectations with their interests independently daily. For the most part, the participants reflected that they were able to efficiently complete their schoolwork leaving the rest of the day open to engage in learning through their interests. These findings are consistent with research of Horgan et al (2017) and Lundy (2007) who suggest that young people are able to overcome curriculum constraints, power inequality, and marginalisation when they are given the opportunity to hold influence over learning.

Finally, the findings of the study suggest participation in diverse communities is influenced by young people's future aspirations reflecting Bourke et al's (2018) dimension of 'purpose' as an important conception of informal learning and Holland et al's (1998) argument that identity formation is conducive to participation in social practice. Horgan et al (2017) and Lundy (2007) also premise meaningful activity as a key motivator for engagement in informal learning experiences. Subsequently, this study suggests young people are goal oriented and are aware of how their choices supports them in becoming selfdetermining individuals.

Conclusion

The findings reflect that young people want to be recognised as full human beings who have character and motivation to actively participate freely in society and they want to be supported by adults in their communities, including school (Lundy, 2007). Young people's valuable learning through their participation in diverse communities when they are not at school could be better recognised and utilised in formal learning contexts. Rogoff's (2014) concept of learning through intent participation exemplifies the unique and valuable knowledge young people gain through their interactions with others and through the contributions they make to the different communities they are a part of. For example, the results show that young people value learning through unique experiences, they enjoy solving real-world problems relative to their sociocultural environment and they feel respected and acknowledged when working collaboratively with more knowledgeable others because they guide them throughout a learning process to

support their development and identity formation. Today, formal learning contexts emphasise student achievement relative to prescribed learning outcomes that conceptualise what learning is important from the perspective of the majority Western world view (Bourke & O'Neill, 2018). It is no wonder young people infer segregation between informal and formal learning contexts because formal learning environments are often very different to the experiences young people participate in outside of school. Subsequently, the differences between young people's engagement with learning at school compared to learning outside of school is twofold; informal learning is more enjoyable and practical whereas formal learning can be less enjoyable and at times, lacks meaning.

Aotearoa New Zealand is a progressively multicultural and multi-ethnic society and our education system should be more inclusive of young people's diverse social and cultural backgrounds (Bevan-Brown, Heung, Jelas, & Phongakorn, 2014). The findings reflect that young people are eager to learn about perspectives within and beyond their interacting ecological systems so they can apply this knowledge towards their development as functioning members of society. Young people's experiences in school often provide them a narrow perspective of the world which is why they engage in diverse communities outside of school; to broaden their perspectives. Providing young people with opportunities to enact their rights, develop agency and influence over their learning in formal learning contexts by incorporating their unique social and cultural experiences outside of school, is an important area of consideration for educators.

Finally, addressing power imbalance issues prevalent in the current formal education system will support the provisions of Article 12 being upheld in Aotearoa New Zealand. The findings reflect previous research findings that young people learn through the demands they meet and through the demands they put on others as they interact across and within different social settings and activities in diverse institutions (Hedegaard, 2012). By learning through intent participation in the diverse communities, young people are a part of young people are able to influence their own lives and in turn the lives of those around them including society as a whole (Horgan et al., 2017). However, at school, adults define the learning outcomes, expectations, and experiences resulting in the construction of an environment that does not reflect all the members of the community. For formal learning communities to be mutually created by all its members, young people must be afforded their right to have influence over their learning.

The findings from this study reflect that the provisions of Article 12 of the UNCRC are being upheld in many ways through young people's participation in learning experiences in their everyday lives. For example, young people engage with learning and influence the decisions around how they learn when they are not at school through intent participation with others embedded within the interacting ecological systems of their sociocultural environments to expand their perspectives. Young people and their sociocultural environments mutually create each other because young people influence their own lives and those around them. Finally, positive affect responses inform young people's decision-making

processes for engagement and participation in informal learning experiences. Many of these conclusions lack efficacy in formal learning contexts simply because young people are being denied their right to having influence over their learning. Young people can be afforded their right to influence their learning when they are at school by recognising and utilising young people's unique ways of learning in their everyday lives in formal learning contexts, ensuring our education system is inclusive of all young people's diverse social and cultural backgrounds and by addressing power imbalance issues prevalent between adults and young people.

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