CCC—CATAPULT: CHALLENGING THE CLIMATE CRISIS: CHILDREN'S AGENCY TO TACKLE POLICY UNDERPINNED BY LEARNING FOR TRANSFORMATION.

INSIGHTS FROM GALWAY, IRELAND

KEY FINDINGS

- **Young people in Galway want more opportunities and spaces to discuss climate change from different angles and be active, but these are often lacking especially in rural areas.**
- **Urban and rural differences in climate education and formal and informal learning spaces exist in the Galway region and this has an impact on young people's engagement with the climate crisis and their agency.**
- **Teachers and educators need supply of climate-focussed professional development and training.**
- **Young people in Galway emphasised the importance of family members' role in contributing to their informal learning and strengthening connections to places that young people consider of personal significance.**
- **Inter-generational dialogue is seen as key to promote climate change awareness, agency, and trust.**
- **Although different mechanisms and platforms exist in Ireland, young people still feel marginalised and excluded from national conversations about climate change.**
- **Research co-production is a powerful tool to promote learning and development, as well as enhancing research design, delivery and interpretation.**

BACKGROUND

The JPI Solstice funded Challenging the Climate Crisis: Children's Agency to Tackle Policy Underpinned by Learning for Transformation (CCC-CATAPULT) project involves young people (15-18-year-olds) as researchers working with academics to examine young people's experiences of and learning around the climate crisis. This project is taking place in locations across Europe, including Bristol (United Kingdom), Galway (Ireland), Tampere (Finland), and Genova (Italy). We have recruited a diverse group of young people in each location to take an active role in both shaping the research itself and collaborating across research locations to explore the research questions.

This policy brief presents key findings and recommendations based on the empirical evidence and the research conducted with young people, teachers in schools and other supporters of learning, as well as from workshops with local stakeholders and policymakers. It focuses on the research activities conducted in Galway, Ireland, and aims to support decision-makers, practitioners, and academics working with young people on tackling the climate crisis in this area, while offering insights and lessons that can be applied in other contexts as well.

Results from Galway indicate that there is an opportunity in Ireland to build on initiatives such as local regional and national Youth Climate Assemblies (see for example Galway City Youth Climate Assembly) through a better understanding of the role that co-productive approaches can play to enrich our understanding of young people's experiences and learning about the climate crisis.

PRINCIPLES OF CO-PRODUCTION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

A key commitment of the CCC-CATAPULT project was to ensure that the research had young people's voices central to its development and delivery. Hence, in the early stages of the project delivery, the project team recruited a group of young people, between 15-18 years old, as co-producers of the research. These young people were then actively involved in longitudinal dialogue about the design of the research, its execution and delivery, its analysis, and, finally, its dissemination.

RESEARCH METHODS

- We used qualitative and quantitative research methods to establish a broad empirical basis across the different case settings. Co-production underpinned all research activities, from design to delivery and interpretation. This was achieved through Youth Action Partnership (YAP) groups. Data collection activities conducted in the Galway region included:
- 510 survey participants: In Galway the survey was distributed to young people in transition year in eleven schools across the city and county and 510 participants completed the survey.
- 9 interviews with teachers and supporters of learning located in Galway and the wider region. While the 4 teachers interviewed represented a diverse range of subject areas, with two geography teachers, a science teacher, and a language and guidance-counselling teacher, our interviewed supporters of learning with young people included a youth worker, an education officer, a citizenship programme co-ordinator, a development officer and a sustainability officer.

The interviews focused on exploring themes related to climate change education and integration and climate change knowledge and confidence.

- 37 young people participated in in-depth focus groups which took place in five separate schools were involved, each ranging in size, school type, location and gender composition. The focus group discussions with 5 groups of transition year students (all aged 15-16 years old) explored three core research themes: trust and intergenerational influence in relation to climate change, the value action gap and transformative futures for addressing the value action gap.
- 4 narrative workshops were conducted in two schools in Galway: This was the third stage in a multi-method research process and the most participatory, open and oblique in the way it gathered young people's perspectives.
- 1 policy workshop: Policy makers from all over Ireland participated in a half day policy workshop which took place online on Wednesday 5th of July 2023. 14 attendees participated in interactive visioning activities and discussions around what climate education in Ireland in 2030 should look like and insights were gathered in relation to how participants could action the CATAPULT work in their own arenas.

The key research findings are presented on the next pages.

FINDINGS

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES AND KNOWLEDGE TOWARDS CLIMATE CHANGE

Young people in Galway think that climate change is an important or very important issue (86%). They are also extremely concerned about the loss of natural habitats and animal species (93%) and about the risks from flooding and sea level rising (84%). Young people are aware of the importance of reducing our dependency on fossil fuels, and they engage in individual climate actions such as re-using and recycling, which 85% consider to be important to tackle the climate crisis. A significant proportion (85%) also thinks that individual actions such as reusing or recycling, are important to tackle climate change, alongside a strong view that national governments and business also need to drive change (79% and 82%). While the vast majority of our respondents based in Galway (88%) feels that their families are supportive of them in being involved in climate actions, 63% expressed the need to receive more information and education on the issue.

FINDINGS

INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE

All interviewees acknowledged the role that educators played in delivering CCE to young people, but some were reluctant to say that educators were responsible due to their heavy workloads. However, most interviewees felt that educators did have a responsibility to teach CCE, but that this responsibility was shared with schools, families, adults, religious organisations, social clubs, governments, and young people.

EDUCATORS` VIEWS ON CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION

All interviewees agreed that educators had an important role to play in teaching young people about the Climate Crisis, although there are limitations resulting from access to resources and time.

Educators from all four city regions in Europe reported that they faced difficulties delivering CCE to young people in relation to the eco-anxiety and burdensome feelings experienced by both young people and educators. Cross-national differences emerge here with educators in Galway reporting facing difficulties teaching the topic to young people who have been exposed to conflicting views at home.

Interviewees were dissatisfied with the lack of suitable training provided to them relating to CCE and expressed the need for more training to equip educators with the necessary knowledge and skills.

IMPORTANCE OF PLACE IN SHAPING CLIMATE CHANGE UNDERSTANDING AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people described the role of their parents and other family members as important in enriching their informal learning experiences and in creating connections to places that young people consider to be personally very significant or important informal learning places.

However, the sense of place can also operate as a barrier to developing agency if, for example, young people tend to perceive climate change as a distant phenomenon that affects faraway places. When framed as a distant phenomenon, our participants struggled to understand the role that they can play, which in turn could affect their overall sense of agency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

INCORPORATING YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES IN CLIMATE POLICY MAKING PROCESSES

- Maximise the visibility, accessibility, and inclusivity of existing engagement channels, including Youth Climate Assemblies, and ensure clarity over the value of young people’s expressed views (feedback).
- Provide ongoing co-production opportunities. For example, involve young people in co-designing new or strengthening existing engagement mechanisms, platforms and events to ensure that they are relevant, accessible, inclusive and resonate with young people’s expectations.
- Build on existing national-level initiatives and provide ongoing local initiatives that are appropriate, inclusive and accessible to young people, particularly in rural areas. Such initiatives should aim to incorporate a diversity of young people voices.
- Incorporate co-produced knowledge directly working with young people to inform national and local climate action plan
- Provide a platform for engagement on open topics, not necessarily specific, pre-determined issues or issues that are linked to policy needs or agendas.

CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION (CCE) AND LEARNING

- Address the strong need for clear and professional climate-focussed development aimed at teachers and educators across all core subjects.
- Develop educators’ and young people’s skills and experiences in engaging with inter-generational dialogues (courageous conversations).
- Strengthen existing or create new spaces and opportunities for climate change discussion, using the principles of co-production as mechanisms to maintain motivation and develop agency.
- Create spaces for climate change discussions and learning prioritising places where there is a particular need (e.g. rural areas).
- CCE should focus on solutions (e.g., nature-based solutions), as well as embedding empathy and self-reflection.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

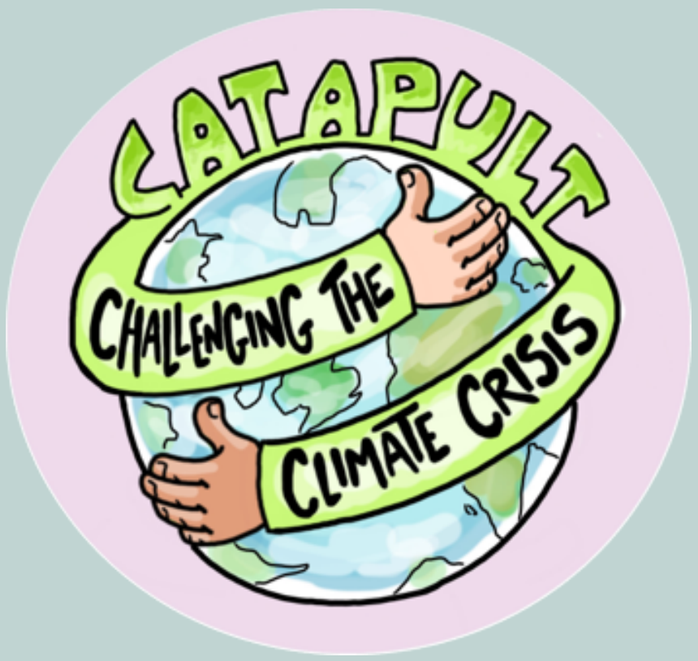
- Investigate the issue of intergenerational trust and intergenerational dialogue on climate change, with a particular focus on rural areas in Ireland and promoting dialogues between school, members of the households, and communities (I.e. involving many stakeholders, including family members).
- Investigate the importance of place and distance for climate change awareness and willingness to engage in climate action (agency), with a focus on the role that young people can play, taking into account where they are in the world.
- Promote research activities focussed on co-creating visions possible and desirable futures with young people of different ages

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FOR FURTHER READING, PAPERS, TOOLKITS AND MATERIALS, PLEASE VISIT

HTTPS://CCC-CATAPULT.ORG



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See the CCC-CATAPULT website for more info: