

Article Summary

Finding Your Tribe! Participatory Evaluation of Co-Creation with Children and Young People in Support of Environmental Action



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Click [here](#) to read our full research paper.

We are a team of researchers from University College Cork and Dublin City University in Ireland. We have been investigating the experiences of children and young people from across Ireland who were involved in Ireland's Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss (2022), and a follow-on co-design project called Teaching Resources for Youth-Informed Biodiversity Education (TRYBE).

In the Assembly 35 children and young people aged 7-17 from across Ireland were randomly selected to learn about biodiversity loss, and to work together to create 58 'calls to action' on what Ireland should do about the issue. One of their calls was about providing education to raise awareness about biodiversity loss.

After the Assembly, some of the children involved joined the TRYBE project where they worked with adults to co-create a biodiversity activity book and other educational materials for other children and young people in Ireland.

What is co-creation? For both the Assembly and TRYBE, children and young people worked together with adults to design the Assembly process and educational materials, instead of just adults deciding what was needed.

Find out about the Assembly and the TRYBE educational resources at: cyp-biodiversity.ie

What were our research questions?

- What can we learn from children and young people's views and experiences of being involved in these types of processes?
- How can these learnings help shape policy and practice on child participation in environmental action?

"We have the right to have a say on anything that's going to affect us. And this proves that bringing, children & young people into the equation and giving them a seat at the table...it will be so much easier to find those solutions." - Assembly & TRYBE participant



What did our research involve?

14 children and young people involved in both the Assembly and TRYBE were asked for their feedback and to take part in group interviews where they discussed their experiences of the participation process and the impact it had on them individually, and on their families, schools and wider community. Their parents were also invited to participate in a separate group interview to share their views too.

What did we find out from the children and young people?



They felt their views and ideas really mattered

They felt the adults involved really listened to them and took their views and ideas seriously.



They valued having the opportunity to influence

Meeting government representatives and hearing how their ideas were used in government policy made them feel respected and proud.



They enjoyed the process and formed strong connections

The process was creative and fun. They formed strong connections with other participants—their “tribe”.

“It only takes a group of people like us to inspire thousands...I think we’ve inspired young people all around the country.” - Assembly & TRYBE participant

Why This Matters

Environmental action requires greater public participation. Our research shows that with the right support, children and young people can make meaningful contributions and be part of shaping decisions to bring about real change in communities and government. They want to be involved in decisions that affect their future.

What we've learned is that when children and young people are meaningfully involved in policy and research, they:

- Bring valuable ideas and insights adults might not think of.
- Feel empowered and motivated to take action, and inspire others.
- Help make educational materials more relevant to children and young people.
- Gain skills and confidence that stay with them.
- Provide valuable learnings that can inform future decision-making processes.