



The University of Manchester




Developing teachers' capacity to support students' assessment experiences:

A participatory action research project in collaboration with high school students

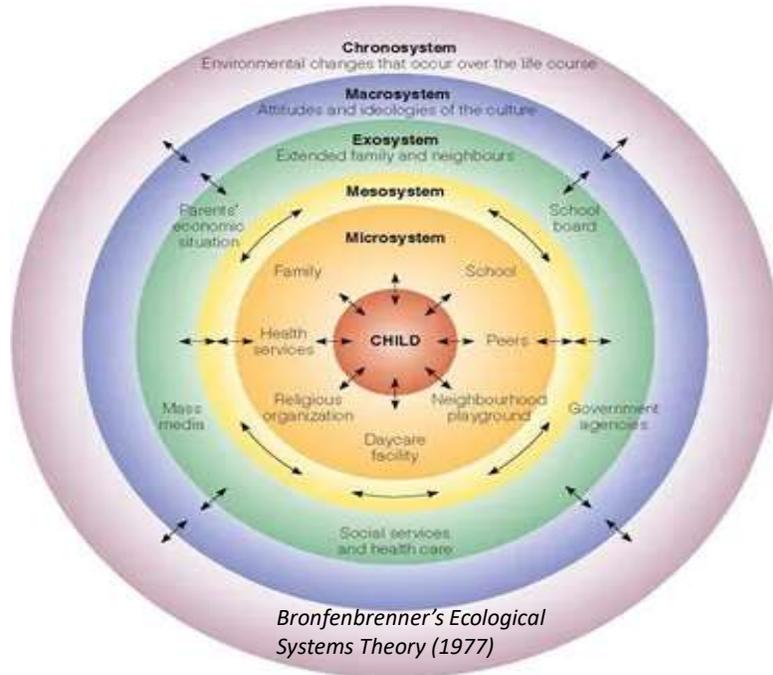
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*Rationale & Aims of the project*

- To understand more about students' experiences of studying for GCSE exams.
- To support teachers' professional development in relation to supporting students through exams.
- To improve students' overall wellbeing during Years 10 & 11
- To collaborate with students and fully involve them in research

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*Supporting  
young  
people's  
wellbeing:  
a teacher's  
role?*



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## Reflections...

*Consider your own experiences of supporting students' wellbeing.*

*In what ways do you support your students' wellbeing?*

*Do you see this as 'part and parcel' of your role?*

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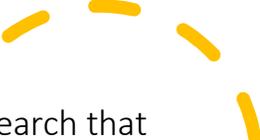
## *The Research Process*

1. Systematic literature review: Participatory Action Research Projects with focus on wellbeing
  2. Recruitment of school & initial contracting
  3. Decisions about participants and methods
  4. RADIO model guided research
  5. Evaluation of project
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## Participatory Action Research



An approach to action research that emphasises participation and action by members of communities that are affected by that research.

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What does existing research tell us about effective collaboration with young people?

Group selection and identity

Engagement of wider school community

Effective channels of communication

Being prepared for raising awareness of mental health

Practicalities of running a PAR project



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### ROGER HART'S LADDER OF PARTICIPATION



**RUNG 8 - Youth initiated shared decisions with adults:** Youth-led activities, in which decision making is shared between youth and adults working as equal partners.

**RUNG 7 - Youth initiated and directed:** Youth-led activities with little input from adults.

**RUNG 6 - Adult initiated shared decisions with youth:** Adult-led activities, in which decision making is shared with youth.

**RUNG 5 - Consulted and informed:** Adult-led activities, in which youth are consulted and informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of adult decisions.

**RUNG 4 - Assigned, but informed:** Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, decision-making process, and have a role.

**RUNG 3 - Tokenism:** Adult-led activities, in which youth may be consulted with minimal opportunities for feedback.

**RUNG 2 - Decoration:** Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, but have no input in how they are planned.

**RUNG 1 - Manipulation:** Adult-led activities, in which youth do as directed without understanding of the purpose for the activities.

Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, as cited in: [www.freechild.org/ladder.htm](http://www.freechild.org/ladder.htm)

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## RADIO model (Timmins et al, 2003)

RADIO Phases	RADIO Stages
Clarifying Concerns (Stages 1-4)	1. Awareness of need
	2. Invitation to act
	3. Identifying organizational and cultural issues
	4. Identifying stakeholders in area of need
Research Methods Mode (Stages 5-8)	5. Agreeing focus of concern
	6. Negotiating framework for data gathering
	7. Gathering information
	8. Processing information with stakeholders
Organisational change mode (Stages 9-12)	9. Agreeing areas for future action
	10. Action planning
	11. Implementation/ action
	12. Evaluating action

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## The Student Survey

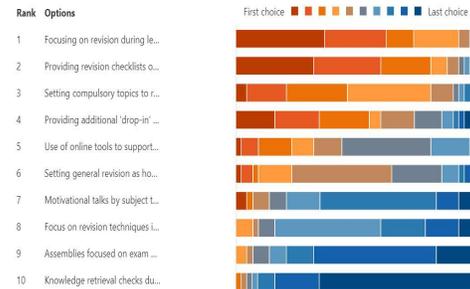


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Q1: When teachers are helping you prepare for upcoming tests/exams (e.g. Big Test week), they may use some of the following strategies. Please select 3 that you find most helpful.

#### THE TOP THREE STRATEGIES

- 1: Providing revision checklists of what to revise (81%)
- 2: Focusing on revision during lesson time (74%)
- 3: Providing additional drop-in revision sessions (56%)



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Q2: What else do teachers do that is helpful?

- Individualised revision lists– RAG style so each student knows the specific topics they need to focus on
- Practical resources to help with revision, e.g. past paper questions, revision booklets, checklists and also help students with their own organisation around revision
- “The Walking Talking Mocks. So the teacher goes through a past paper without being prepared.”
- Giving tasters of what will be on the test
- Giving plenty of notice/time to prepare for assessment weeks – giving the revision list earlier (2 weeks – 1 month before the exam)

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Q3: Is there anything you find unhelpful when preparing for tests?

- Assemblies about revision/exam pressure
- Lessons on new content, not relevant to tests
- Being set homework that isn't related to the upcoming tests
- Lack of time to prepare – not being given enough notice/time to revise. Not being given dates of tests in advance. Would like them at start of the year.
- Not going over topics enough in lessons.

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Q4: What helps to motivate you when preparing for tests/exams?

- Only 19% of responses related to things that teachers can do directly to help motivate students .
- Friends – talking/spending time/working with them in lessons/healthy competition within class (13%)
- Achieving good results – satisfaction of gaining good outcome. Thinking of the future – aspirations/ goals
- Making parents happy
- “Knowing it’s temporary and that hard times are like dirt, they are full of nutrients and fertilisers and everyone has dirt on them, but it shapes you.”
- “The future, GCSE results, friends, competition within the class and within the school and meeting the expectations my teachers have set for me.”
- “Other people who are smarter than me makes me want to beat them so I can prove that I’m smart.”
- 5 said nothing helps - Nothing really. I just know I need to do this in order to get good grades.

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## Motivation and exam stress

- Fear appeals
- Efficacy appeals
- Teacher self-efficacy
- Emphasis on mastery of skills
- Perceived good quality teaching
- Caring staff



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## Theories of motivation: Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs

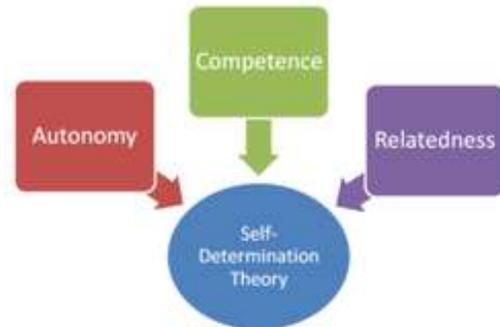


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## Self-determination theory - Deci & Ryan, 1985

### Practical examples for the classroom:

- **Autonomy.** Fostering independent learning skills, tasks that students can complete independently (differentiation is key here).
- **Competence.** Small, achievable tasks at first, gradually building in complexity until confidence grows. Positive, specific feedback on small steps of achievement.
- **Relatedness.** Positive relationships with other students and teachers. Opportunities to build these relationships during lesson time (e.g. pair/group work).



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*Is exam stress necessarily a bad thing?*

Stress can be positive or negative, depending whether it is viewed as an opportunity or a threat. Anxiety is only negative (Howard, 2020).

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## Q5. Is there anything teachers can say or do to support you so that you worry less about tests?

More time spent on revision in lessons – start 2 weeks before tests.

A prayer room would help to reduce stress – it would need to be well-managed to avoid anyone messing about/misusing the room

“For me personally, what I think is that teachers cannot do something to motivate a person to be less nervous in the test. The only way to reduce the level of worry is by dealing with it by yourself.”

Being given more ways to deal with stress during form sessions, other than mindfulness

Checking individual understanding in lessons

13/31 said there is nothing that teachers can really do about it.

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## Summary and acknowledgments

Emma@catalystpsych.co.uk

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## References and links

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