



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
Children, Youth and Civic Engagement
Ireland



NUI Galway
OE Gaillimh

CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE



Foróige's
Youth Development Programmes

Citizenship

A Briefing Paper on the Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme Evaluation





Introduction

This briefing paper provides a summary of the evaluation of the Foróige Youth Citizenship programme in terms of type, methodology, results and conclusion. This is a companion to the Leadership and Citizenship Information Booklet and should be read in this context in order to understand fully the nature and effect of the programme.



Why this research?



Foróige established its citizenship programme in 1968 in response to a need to engage youth in Irish civic society. The programme has grown steadily since this time. The purpose of the programme is to promote community awareness and connection for young people. The core model underpinning the programme is one of 'awareness, action, evaluation' whereby young people undertake a three phased approach to identifying and responding to a community or social issue. Over 12,000 young people take part in the programme in youth clubs and projects throughout Ireland each year. In order to establish the benefits that accrue for young people who participate in the programme, Foróige commissioned the National University of Ireland, Galway to carry out an independent evaluation.

Nature of the research

This study involved a mixed-methodology approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative components in order to establish how much and in what ways (if any) the programme has proven benefits. Under the quantitative strand of the research, 289 young people involved in Foróige clubs and projects completed questionnaires during a tracking study incorporating two time points over a year long period. This research included a quasi-experimental component with young people receiving the Foróige citizenship programme and a comparison group who did not. Data collection tools were in part designed based on the work of Richard E. Lerner (Positive Youth Development and Civic Competence). The qualitative strand of the research included case studies of citizenship projects groups as well as interviews with staff, managers and focus groups with youth.



“My parents won the Foróige Youth Citizenship Award in 1988. It’s inspiring to think that more than 20 years later, I represented my club at the same event. Not many teenagers can share an experience like that with their parents”.



Ciara
from Cong Foróige Club



TALENT

INITIATIVE

What are the key findings?



Quantitative evidence

The key findings of this part of the research were as follows:

- Young people who had previously taken part in a Citizenship Programme rated themselves as more likely to get involved in a community issue in the future than those who had not taken part in a Citizenship Programme. They also demonstrated higher perceived competence to take action on community issues.
- Young people who had taken part in a Citizenship Programme at any time scored higher on civic competence than the comparison group.
- Involvement in the Citizenship Programme has a cumulative benefit. Statistically significant differences were observed on the civic competence measure for young people who had taken part in a Citizenship Programme more than once, when compared to others.

In summary, the data indicates that those who participated in the Citizenship Programme had higher self-rated competence to take positive action on community issues. The findings also show that ratings for the Foróige Citizenship Programme were very positive, with over 95% of young people who took part rating it as “good” or higher. Furthermore, those who rated the programme as “excellent” were more likely to score highly on the ‘participatory citizen’ scale compared to those rating the programme as good.

Qualitative evidence

Interviews and focus groups with a range of stakeholders identified the following benefits:

- The development of confidence and skills among young people as a result of undertaking the programme.
- Adult leaders witnessed an increased level of confidence among youth, particularly those who had been withdrawn.
- Youth awareness of social needs in the community increased.
- Respondents, both young and adult, perceived youth as having a greater connection to the community as a result of participation.
- Youth reported positive feedback from the wider community in terms of their perception of youth contributions.
- Young people developed a sense of self-efficacy in relation to addressing issues of concern in the community.



12,000 YOUNG PEOPLE GET INVOLVED





Factors of Success

The study identified a range of factors which assisted in the success of the programme. These include:

- The existence of a strong culture of support for the programme and keen interest in encouraging youth to be involved in their communities.
- Sponsorship from an Irish bank enabled Foróige to expand the programme, provide additional resources for projects and to run regional and national events.
- A positive media profile, including an annual television show and national event, helped to raise the profile of the programme and create a sense of excitement around the programme.
- The resource manual developed for the Citizenship Programme, is an invaluable resource for staff, volunteers and young people.

Conclusion

The Foróige citizenship programme represents an important Irish initiative in the promotion of youth civic engagement, with great potential for international implementation. It embodies practices that are highlighted in the literature as being associated with good practice in youth civic engagement programming. Both the quantitative and qualitative data demonstrates that participation in the Youth Citizenship Programme enhances young people's perceived competence for civic action. In particular, the programme can be successful in connecting young people with their communities, developing skills and confidence, promoting bonding between team members and enhancing club development. The programme is effective in its objective of engaging young people as active citizens and encouraging them to make a positive contribution to their communities and to society.

Quality Assurance Statement

This is by way of confirmation that the independent evaluation of the Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme was conducted to a high level and reviewed by subject matter experts. The results accruing from the study indicate a rigorous evaluation of the programme and are presented in a fair and unbiased manner.

Professor Pat Dolan,

UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement, NUI Galway.

Professor Mark Brennan,

Leadership & Community Development, Penn State.



Foróige

Block 12D, Joyce Way
Park West
Dublin 12

Phone: +353 1 630 1560

Fax: +353 1 630 1568

Email: info@foroige.ie