

# World Power League

A Futurelab prototype research report



by **Ben Williamson**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This report is intended to document the process of the design of the World Power League (formerly known as 'Public Private Matters') project, the issues and opportunities arising from work with students in the early stages of development during spring 2005, and the trials of the resulting application in July 2005. The report provides recommendations for further development, and considers its potential uses in school contexts.

The World Power League was developed by the core team:

Lucy Kimbell, Interaction Designer and Artist  
Barby Asante, Artist  
George Grinsted, Web Programmer  
Rachel Collinson, Graphic Designer  
Futurelab staff designed and conducted all research activities.

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The World Power League project set out to explore the possibility of creating a web application that would allow young people to engage with issues of power, citizenship and politics. It was intended to support the development of their active participation as citizens. A literature survey identified the need for the system to make users feel that they have a 'voice' and that their views 'count'; to allow them to appreciate others' perspectives, values and beliefs; and to identify how power, politics and citizenship acts take place in local communities as well as nationally and internationally.

The project has led to the development of the World Power League, a prototype web-based application created in late spring and early summer 2005. It allows users to cast votes in a series of 'duels': two people are randomly selected from a database, and users have to vote for which they feel ought to have more power. The results of voting are automatically arranged hierarchically in the league itself, allowing users to see the results of group voting, and to see if their votes match up with the overall tally. They can also then nominate themselves as candidates in the league by drafting a manifesto, identifying issues related to power, politics and citizenship that they would like to change, and submitting it to the system. Trials of the application took place at two school sites in summer 2005. Students were generally engaged by and enthusiastic about their use of the World Power League. They liked the voting system, and thought that the randomness and incongruity of mixing politics with entertainment and with 'normal people' made it interesting. They also thought it occasionally stimulated some quite difficult decision-making, as when one boy reported that he had to choose between Saddam Hussain and George Bush.

The representation of users' votes as a hierarchical league worked well. Students reported finding it interesting and surprising to see how their views matched up with or departed from those of their peers. Several students reported surprise that their peers were more likely to have voted for political or cultural figures instead of media and entertainment personalities. Many students responded to using the website with some complex thoughts about power and power relations, particularly the perceived abuses of power by western leaders in the war in Iraq, and the cycle of power displays by terrorist groups and western governments alike in the war on terrorism. They also identified the role of celebrity power in campaigns such as Make Poverty History and the Olympics bid.

When writing their own manifestos as potential candidates in the league, most students made generic statements of citizenship or restated the aims of make Poverty History rather than proposing changes to their immediate local context. It is likely in any further trials of the website that more meaningful responses would be made possible by focusing students on local rather than global issues.

Overall, trials of the application demonstrated its potential usefulness for highlighting issues of power, citizenship and politics. It led many students to identify some complex concepts related to who has power and how it is used, and it allowed them to build a powerful representation of their shared views, or at least of the views of the voting majority. The World Power League or similar application could be used to promote education around democracy, to facilitate young people's decision-making on important issues to do with their schools or communities, or to allow them to share and analyse the differing results from leagues carried out at different geographical and cultural sites.

At this stage, it seems sensible to conclude that the World Power League is sufficiently engaging and interesting and surprising to students for it potentially to support meaningful work in citizenship, PSHE, history – or for 'democracy in schools'-related activities.

## 2. SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT AND TRIAL ACTIVITIES

The following table provides a summary of all activities during the design and development and the trial of the World Power League with young people.

<b>Prototype stage</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Summary of key outcomes</b>
Pre-build	23/02/05 02/03/05 09/03/05 16/03/05 23/03/05	Five sessions of 45 mins with 21 yr10 students at a north London community school  Lucy Kimbell, Barby Asante & teacher	To develop concepts for application  To gauge students' level of awareness of topic  To gauge students' interest	Range of activities based around themes of power and politics, including class discussions, drawing, annotating maps of school and nation, creating wall-based concept maps of citizenship and political acts
Development workshop	24/03/05	Barby Asante, Lucy Kimbell, George Grinsted, Rachel Collinson + Ben Williamson & Jo Morrison	To review all documentation from student workshops  To define objectives of application	Theme of power agreed as focus  Initial functionality discussed  Period of creative exploration agreed
Wireframe & technical specification development	25/03 – 19/04/05	Barby Asante, Lucy Kimbell, George Grinsted, Rachel Collinson	To develop specification for design and development of application	Wireframes & spec delivered as per agreed schedule  FL staff reviewed and provided feedback  FL carried out data protection and image licensing check and advised on necessary design modifications
Wireframe trial	20/04/05	21 north London students + Barby	To test out students'	

		Asante, Lucy Kimbell + teacher	understanding of designs  To assess usability	
Project review	09/05/05	Barby Asante, Lucy Kimbell, Ben Williamson, Jo Morrison, Becca Chandler, Clara Mortimer, Peter Ferne	To review progress, discuss wireframes and functionality  To agree necessary changes to proposed application based on data protection/legal matters	Agreed on designs and technical spec  Agreed necessary modifications
Design and development	10/05 – 21/06/05	Barby Asante, Lucy Kimbell, George Grinsted, Rachel Collinson	To develop a fully designed and functional application	Application delivered as scheduled, as per agreed specification  Application passed short internal quality assurance test
Pilot trial	22/06/05	21 north London students, + Lucy Kimbell, George Grinsted, Ben Williamson & teacher	To assess usability and robustness of application  To observe students' level of interest  To identify how activities for main trial should be structured and supported	Application proved technically robust in school setting  Most students engaged by application, and able to navigate effectively  Some students able to provide thoughtful responses on themes and topics  Identified need for supporting activities and materials to 'scaffold' use in main trial
Main trial #1	09/07/05	21 yr10 students, South Wales comprehensive school + Ben Williamson & Sarah Godfrey, Futurelab	To embed use of application in supporting activities, inc. individual 'play', group 'play', small group discussions & class discussion  To observe students'	2 case study students recorded on video camera throughout trial  21 questionnaire responses collected  4 group interviews completed (17 students) and audio recorded  Application proved

			<p>engagement with application</p> <p>To record 2 case study students' interactions with application during use</p> <p>To record students' feedback and understanding through group interview and individual questionnaire responses</p>	<p>intuitive, engaging, and motivating for most students</p> <p>Most students able to provide thoughtful responses on application functionality and themes</p>
Main trial #2	20/07/05	Yr10 students, north London + Barby Asante & teacher	To trial WPL in context on a single citizenship lesson	<p>Students provided verbal responses to use of the WPL</p> <p>Demonstrated viability of use of WPL in citizenship lesson context</p>

### 3. CONTEXT

This section outlines some of the recent research and policy that impacts on the World Power League project. The research questions outlined in the section below arise from this survey of the literature, which focuses on a) the provision of citizenship education in the UK, b) young people's participation and 'student voice' issues, and c) young people's engagement with the issues of power and politics.

#### a) Citizenship

Citizenship as a specific curricular subject in England became statutory for secondary schools and recommended for primary schools in September 2002, based on the framework proposed by the 1998 Crick Report (Crick 1998). The report recommended that citizenship education should provide "moral and social development", encourage "community involvement", and develop students' "political literacy". Broadly, this curricular commitment aimed to address concerns that children were not receiving sufficient education in values, were uninformed about current issues, and did not see themselves as active citizens in a democracy.

More positively it is also intended to educate young people to become informed active members of society able to participate on many levels (Holden 2004). In secondary schools, this has been translated more explicitly as studying spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues; understanding local community and the world as a global community; and understanding democracy and the institutions that support it (DfEE/QCA 1999).

While citizenship as a discrete subject does exist, many secondary schools also prefer to combine it with other disciplines and extra events in order to broaden its impact and avoid isolating it as an add-on or an updated PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) program

(Breslin 2004)—although students in many schools may choose to take the specific Citizenship Studies GCSE Short Course in Year 11.

## **b) Student voice and participation**

Another aspect of citizenship education aims to promote child participation in decision-making. In a review of the literature on citizenship, Selwyn (2002) endorses a 'maximal' approach to citizenship education which emphasises 'educating *through* citizenship' and 'educating *for* citizenship', rather than just 'educating *about* citizenship'. In this conceptualisation, students learn through active, participative experiences in their schools and local communities, and they are equipped with a set of tools (knowledge and understanding, skills and aptitudes, values and dispositions) necessary for sensible active participation in the roles and responsibilities they will encounter in their adult lives (8-9). Arthur and Davison (2000), similarly, discriminate between 'passive' citizenship education which seeks to develop knowledge, understandings and behaviours for future participation in UK democracy, and 'active' citizenship education which promotes learning the skills to "critique, debate, and even take a leadership role in proposing alternative models of the structures and processes of democracy" (11). Passive citizenship education seeks to train young people to obey the law and to resist change, which Sir Bernard Crick (2004) defines as the kind of 'good citizenship' that, in an extreme example, exists in autocratic states such as North Korea. Good citizens may even vote in a democratic society, and they may sign a standing order to support voluntary bodies or pressure groups, but these are not instances of active citizenship, nor of active participation. Citizenship as a curricular subject, and particularly if taught as an active and participative process rather than just knowledge and rules to be learned, should have the capacity, then, to change the very institutions of schooling in the future, and to educate young people to critique and debate the very structures of a modern democracy.

However, it is necessary to understand more fully what might be meant by participation. Indeed, it is necessary to sound a few notes of caution. Firstly, it is clear that there are tensions between the view that sees children as autonomous individuals, and the parental and societal view that is inclined to problematise and marginalise children (Roche 1999), seeing them as innocent and incompetent dependents in need of protection (Stasiulis 2002; Jans 2004). Secondly, and more importantly, it is necessary to accept that offering children equal participation in decision-making can itself lead to irreconcilable conflicts between existing value-systems, ethical standards and beliefs (Berman 1997). The challenge of educating for participation in citizenship is to provide relevant apparatuses for reflection on one's own and others' actions as participants in a pluralist society where diverse cultures, subcultures, and their associated values and interests all exist alongside each other.

Jans (2004) complicates this further in a discussion on the changing economic, political and social conditions of contemporary society; namely, by the two, ostensibly opposite 'postmodern' tendencies of globalisation and individualisation. Young people in a postmodern or late modern society (at least in the West) are likely to share similar cultural and leisure pursuits as those on other quarters of the globe; at the same time they are able to exercise their own individual agencies outside of the institutions of the family, school and work, and to develop their own lifestyles and (sub)cultures, as well as rights, values and norms, that are separate from those of the adult sphere. In Jans' view, it is this apparent set of opposites which has brought about the discourses of participation that "aim to bring about new connections between the individual and the community" (Jans 2004: 30), and which, for Berman (1997) aim to make young people aware that they are "rooted within a larger social network, within interlocking communities that range from the local to the global" (Berman 1997: 12). In an empirical study in Australia, Howard and Gill (2001) suggest that young people are increasingly beginning to adopt new forms of national identity "that involve an easy slippage between the global and the local, the national and the international" (103), indicating that educating for participation is going to require a commitment to fostering young people's ability to be reflective about their interactions with others at a number of levels. Young people

will, increasingly, need to be educated as citizens able to negotiate personal, social, cultural, inter-cultural, and political concerns from a number of differing, even conflicting, viewpoints.

### **c) Young people, power and politics**

Young people are feeling increasingly disenfranchised by 'capital P' Politics. Livingstone et al (2004) claim that "in developing policy to support and facilitate young people's participation, key issues remain unresolved":

Should 'civic' and 'political' be defined narrowly, meaning party politics, government and voting, or should they be defined broadly, including identity politics and social movement issues such as environmental protection, animal rights, anti-globalisation, gay rights and community activism? (3)

While not wishing to understate the importance of educating young people about Politics with a capital P, these authors recognise that many young people declare 'Politics' to be boring, dull and irrelevant to them - something perhaps at least partly attributable to their inability to vote until the age of 18. But they state that it is important to recognise, as some young people do, that politics as a broad definition encompasses many issues that do concern young people. In Howard and Gill's (2000) research with young children, the question of children's perceptions of power and politics was studied in relation to the institutions of the family, school and community. In this study, they suggest that children as young as 5 years old perceive distinct benevolent power relations between themselves and their parents, relations that are linear and one way in terms of parents' responsibilities towards them rather than in terms of some kind of mutual system of rights and responsibilities. Older children in the 9-12 years range in the study, however, tended to see power in the family as more "systems-oriented and involved recognition of a mutual and reciprocal set of rights and responsibilities" (362). At school, of course, these relations are more pronounced, and again Howard and Gill report that younger children (under 10 years) perceived school power in linear terms, but that the older children (10 and over) in the study were beginning to recognise that authority confers responsibility towards others and those others have rights. Some also recognised the power of peer groups to influence decisions.

In their conclusion, the authors argue that children develop an awareness of power from a very early age that gradually expands to encompass increasingly broad areas, from the family unit through school and peer groups, to community levels:

Although adults do clearly mediate understanding about power to a degree, the child is enmeshed in power relations of various kinds and with various different power agents right from the beginning; their experience of power is direct and lived and thus open to interpretation, but that interpretation will be affected by age, social context, cognitive ability and so on (376).

This socio-cultural analysis of children's experiences of power and politics suggests that their emerging understandings and conceptions vary, and that their lack of knowledge about political structures does not imply an inability to understand, or a lack of interest in power relations. Rather, the roles of power and politics in the family, school and community need to be made more explicit, and opportunities to explain democratic processes within these structures need to be made:

In this way the home, the classroom and the school will become important sites for children to develop social capital; an essential quality, in our view, for a participative citizenry and a truly civil society (378).

Lister et al (2003) have conducted a similar study in the UK, focusing on young people from 16 to 23 years of age, in order to better illustrate how young people "negotiate the transitions to citizenship" (236). The article follows David Miller (2000) by suggesting that many people in

the UK do not understand the concept of citizenship except in the 'formal passport-holding sense', and that for some the terms British and English are interchangeable, indicating that even national identity in the UK is not a simple matter. Further, Lister et al identified that young people perceive varying strata of citizenship to exist in the UK, with "first-class citizens" personified by the "educated home-owner with a secure job, family and car, in other words, the embodiment of [...] the socio-economic status quo" (243). "Second class citizens", on the other hand, were perceived in the study to be the unemployed, homeless, or otherwise disenfranchised groups: "they are seen as dependent, as not exercising responsibility, as not contributing to or participating in society as tax-payers or consumers" (242). These perceptions of stratified citizenship models also persisted in race, age, and in the eligibility to vote, with young respondents stating that citizenship connoted for them "people who are so high up", or that they saw it defined by "the whole voting thing, [...] and being able to count as something" (ibid). The most dominant model of citizenship arising from this study was one rooted in membership of the community or nation, rather than one defined in active, participative, or social-contractual terms:

It is the communitarian model to which the young people were most likely to subscribe [...]. They also displayed a belief in at least some 'civic virtues' [...] and the importance to citizenship of civility and respect [...] and giving to the community [...]. Liberal rights-based and civic-republican political participation-based models did not figure prominently in their discussions (251).

This is significant in terms of how young people define citizenship in the UK, not least since the civic-republican model of citizenship is the one to which the Crick Advisory Group (1998) subscribed in their advice on citizenship education to the DfES (Crick 2004). It is also at odds with the 'successful citizen' model promoted by Thatcherism and the succeeding New Labour agenda - economically independent, with money, own car, and a family - which reinforces, rather than challenges, age-old class divisions (Lister et al 2003). The concepts of citizenship and of politics, then, to young people appear exclusionary as well as inclusionary.

The potential for new technologies, and particularly the internet, to be used to strengthen the link between young people and citizenship is currently being asserted by researchers (see Selwyn 2002; Livingstone et al 2004), think tanks (see Howland and Bethnell (Demos) 2002) and even politicians - notably, in the Home Secretary David Blunkett's claim that "Digital technology has important implications for the relationship between citizen and state" (IPPR 2004). Some even suggest that new media and new technology define society so completely that they should be at the core of the content for citizenship education (Miller 2001; Turnbull and Muir 2001). Livingstone et al's (2004) report for the UK Children Go Online project, "Active participation or just more information" is, however, more cautious. This report asks whether using the internet can draw young people into participation:

[O]ne must ask, what kinds of opportunities, what forms of interactivity, what civic interests? Do young people embrace all or some? And why? What exactly must young people do online before society will judge them 'politically active' or 'engaged in civic participation'? (3)

These aspects of recent research and policy have helped to identify a number of issues relevant to the World Power League project. Notably, that:

- it should pursue a model of active citizenship in which students are allowed to feel that they have a 'voice' and can make a difference - can be counted - in a democratic system
- it should highlight pluralism and diversity and help to equip students to identify, reflect on and appreciate others' perspectives, values, and beliefs
- it should enable students to recognise the social networks in which they act, and the ways in which power operates through those communities



- it should be inclusionary, in that it should allow young people to see how power, politics and citizenship are issues in which they have a stake and may be active, not simply structures in which they are subordinate.

#### 4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

From this literature, the following research questions were developed in order to begin to evaluate the effectiveness of the World Power League.

1. What is the effect of involving young people in the design and development process of the web application?
2. How can the web application support young people to identify and engage with issues of international, national and local power, politics and citizenship, and what responses from them to these issues does use of the application stimulate?
3. How can the application support young people to identify opportunities for the development of their active participation as citizens?

As a sub-set of these questions for the main trial itself, the following questions were formulated to address the actual functionality and aims of the World Power League website:

- a. Can the World Power League (be used to) support young people to identify and discuss what sort of power famous figures have, and what discussion responses does it stimulate?
- b. Can the World Power League (be used to) support young people to create democratically produced, shared representations of their value systems and beliefs about who should have power, rather than who does have power, and how do young people respond to this?
- c. Can the World Power League (be used to) support young people to identify and discuss how power operates at local and personal levels that have an everyday effect on their schools, communities, families and themselves, and what discussion responses emerge?
- d. Do young people find using the World Power League engaging and interesting?

Note that the wording 'be used to' in these questions has been included as use of the application during the main trial was led by the researcher in a classroom context with a number of other supporting activities; it was not used by students in a self-motivated fashion or regarded as a standalone application able to support young people to develop new understandings in isolation.

Findings relating to the sub-set questions a-d are discussed in section 8 (Findings), before questions 1-3 are addressed specifically in section 9 (Answering the questions).

#### 5. TRIAL DESIGN AND METHODS

##### 5.1 Sample

Two school sites have been involved in the development and trials of the World Power League.

**A Community School, North West London.** 21 students in Year 10 at a northwest London community school participated in development workshops which occurred every Wednesday morning for five weeks during February and March 2005. All sessions at the school took place within timetabled Citizenship lessons.

The school serves an ethnically diverse community of nearly 1,200 students<sup>1</sup>. Its exam performance is slightly below the national average at all key stages, although a recent Ofsted report praised the school for improvements across all age groups. The percentage of students with SEN is in line with the national average. The percentage of students entitled to a free school meal is above the national average. Due to the short 45-minute lesson structure of the school day, punctuality is poor, and poor behaviour by a significant minority is a reported problem.

The school was initially shortlisted for involvement as a trial and development site due to its mixed ethnicity, student performance and its site within a multicultural community.

**A Comprehensive School, South Wales.** 21 students in Year 10 participated in the trial of the World Power League which took place on 9 July 2005.

The school serves a predominantly white middle class community from the town itself and from nearby rural villages. Behaviour and punctuality at the school are both good, exam results are in line with the national average, as is the percentage of students with SEN and claiming free school meals. The behaviour of the students throughout the trial day was very good.

This school was chosen as a trial site for the project from a shortlist of rural and semi-rural South Wales schools selected by the researcher, Ben Williamson. It was felt that holding this trial in a non-urban site would help to illustrate the resonance of the program with a rather different demographic group from the London sample. Additionally, citizenship is not a compulsory subject in Wales, but taught at this school as discrete components of PSHE and History.

## 5.2 Dates, duration and trial set-up

Workshop sessions at the north London school occurred every Wednesday morning from 9:40 to 10:25, each therefore lasting 45 minutes, during February and March 2005. A further usability session using paper-based wireframes in May, and the two later trial sessions in June and July occurred during the same Wednesday morning session.

The main trial at the Welsh Comprehensive took place over one day, Monday 11 July 2005. One initial session with a group of 17 students took place from 9:05 to 10:05 in the morning. The same 17 students, in groups of four, all then attended a 20-minute group interview during the middle part of the day. A further whole group session took place from 2:20 to 3:20 that afternoon. Due to some earlier confusion by a small number of students who had missed their morning tutorial before the morning session and were therefore unaware of the location or time of the morning trial, an additional four students attended the afternoon session. A total of 21 students therefore used the program and responded to it in questionnaire form.

It should be noted in some of the students' comments from the main trial reported in this document that the date of the trial came only nine days after the Live8 initiative which aimed to raise awareness of third world poverty through a series of major concerts and media events across the world; only one day after the end of the G8 summit in Gleneagles, Scotland; and only four days following a series of terrorist bomb attacks on London transport which had left 56 people dead and hundreds injured. These various displays of power and protest, all widely discussed in broadcast and print media, may well have heightened the awareness of students to some of the issues that the World Power League was designed to promote. It was also notable that a significant number of the students were wearing Make Poverty History wristbands.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Ofsted report, the ethnic mix of the school comprises approximately one-third of white British, Irish or European origin, one-third of Asian Indian or Pakistani origin, and one-third of Black Caribbean or African origin.

The trial day was divided into three distinct sessions:

**Session 1: 9:05-10:05am, whole class (17 students)**

1. Researcher asked all students a number of questions:

- Who is the most powerful person in the world? Why? What sort of power does s/he have? etc
- Who is most powerful person in UK? Why? What sort of power does s/he have? etc
- What different sorts of power can they identify?

2. Researcher showed images of some powerful people, asking students to respond to the questions:

- What sorts of power do these people have?
- How do they use it and what do you think of how they use it?

3. Students 'played' the World Power League for approx 20 minutes, having been informed that they were voting for their ideal world power system.

4. Students were asked to gather in small groups of three to four to discuss the top 5 candidates in the league, and were asked to respond to the question:

- Do you agree or disagree with the top 5 your class has voted for, and why?

5. A brief whole group discussion was led by the researcher, viewing the league as a whole. Students were asked to respond to the questions:

- What sorts of power does the class prefer?
- What sort of world would we live in if the most powerful people in the world were the five or so that you have voted for?

**Session 2: 30-min periods throughout day, small groups (three groups of four students, one group of five students)**

1. Students created their own personal profile, and wrote a short manifesto, explaining what sort of power they believe they have and what they would propose doing with their power as a candidate in the World Power League.

2. Researcher led 20-minute semi-structured group interviews. The interview schedule can be found in Appendix 2.

**Session 3: 2:20-3:20pm, whole class (21 students)**

1. Students played the World Power League again, this time voting for their peers as well as famous figures. They were also encouraged to nominate other famous candidates, drafting short manifestos for each.

2. A short whole group discussion was led by the researcher, with students identifying which of their peers were 'winning' in the league, and asked why they thought these students were so popular with the class.

3. Students were asked to 'filter' the league by gender, nationality and so on in order to identify the most powerful males and females in the league, the most powerful person under 20 years old, and the nationalities of the most powerful figures in the league.

4. Students completed a short feedback questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire can be

found in Appendix 3.

### 5.3 Methods of data collection and analysis

Three principle data collection methods were employed for the main trial at the South Wales school site:

**1. Case study video recording.** Two students, one male, 'Matthew', one female, 'Kathryn', were randomly selected at the beginning of the day and were then asked if they minded being filmed throughout their use of the application, during small group discussion, and during interview. Both students reported being happy to be filmed. These video recordings have been viewed and observations relating to the research questions are reported in this document.

**2. Interview audio recording.** All students who attended the small group interviews were recorded on audio cassette. These interviews have not been fully transcribed, but a selection of students' responses relating to the research questions are included in this report.

**3. Self-completion questionnaires.** All students completed a short questionnaire at the end of the trial day. All responses to the questionnaire have been collated and are reported in this document.

### 5.4 Trial objectives

The above data collection and analysis methods were employed in order to gather a number of different sets of data that might answer the research questions.

The objectives of the case study recordings and observations were to be able to report how students used the application, whether it appeared to have maintained their interest and engagement, and what conversations its use promoted. In order to begin answering the research questions relating to students' responses to the application and their identification of the ideas it promotes, it was felt that a qualitative report of the students' talk while using it would provide rich data indicating their intellectual and emotional responses to it. Interviews were intended to capture students' emotional and intellectual responses to the application after their first use of it, and to develop a sense of their interest and intellectual engagement with the issues of power, politics and citizenship that the application is designed to promote.

Questionnaire data were recorded in order to be able to provide a simple statistical summary of the group's interest in the application, their rating of its usability and look-and-feel, and to encourage all students to provide some qualitative reviews of what they found to be positive and negative about it.

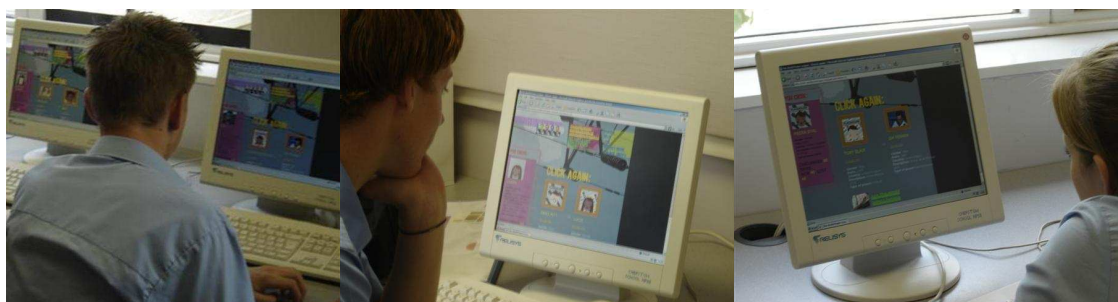


Fig 1: South Wales trial

## 6. DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Five student workshops were conducted at the north London community school, occurring each Wednesday morning for 45 minutes with one group of Year 10 students during their citizenship lessons.

These workshops were initially intended to involve students as co-designers of the web application. However, the somewhat chaotic nature of the class with whom these sessions took place meant that it was not possible to involve them as co-designers; rather, they helped to inform its development at a conceptual level. The workshop activities elicited from the students their understandings, interests and concerns with issues of power, which were then used as the basis for the website design.

## 7. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

### 7.1 Prototype

The World Power League prototype is a website that makes visible, in real-time, the collective view of all users, whoever they are, of who should have power. It allows young people to make visible who they think should have power, as opposed to who they actually think does already have it. Users vote in 'duels', selecting from a pair of randomly presented, powerful personalities, which they think should be the most powerful in their own opinion. The website collates these responses automatically and structures a hierarchical league of the results. An initial 'seed' sample of well-known political and spiritual leaders, activists, media stars, intellectuals, financial and sporting successes was included in the database. These were categorised according to the following scheme in Figure 2:

<b>Political</b>	As well as what we might consider as the usual suspects such as world leaders and politicians, this category also includes royalty, political activists and anyone whose influence is to do with matters of institutional political significance.
<b>Financial</b>	This is power derived from money. This could be through control of a workforce, property or business ownership or it could be through some other connection like a rich parent.
<b>Attractiveness</b>	People who are conventionally attractive hold, we think, a kind of power. People who are able to charm other people so that their ideas are attractive also have power.
<b>Media</b>	This is the power held by people working within the media, whether they are front of house (TV personalities, pop stars, film stars) or behind the scenes (producers, A&R people in the music industry).
<b>Spiritual</b>	This is the power that comes from someone's position within a religious or spiritual community, whether formal and institutionalised or not.
<b>Sport</b>	This is a category that has crossovers with the media, but given its own category to make visible the particular sway that sporting heroes play in the contemporary world.
<b>Physical</b>	Perhaps one of the most simple types of power to understand which many of us will have experienced, physical strength (and the ability to use it) is an important and basic form of power.
<b>Intellectual</b>	This is the power of people who have particular knowledge, expertise or intellectual talent, such as writers, scientists, philosophers and thinkers.
<b>Powerless</b>	We thought this was an important category to include. We found during our prototype testing that some of the young people we talked to chose this when making their profiles.

Fig 2: Power categories used in WPL

The prototype World Power League website consists of three key features:

- 1) Facilities for users to vote for those candidates in the system who they believe ought to have power (see Fig 3).
- 2) A screen representing all votes cast as a hierarchical league, with the capacity for the league to be filtered by gender, year of birth, nationality, and type of power (see Fig 4).
- 3) Facilities for users to nominate themselves or others for inclusion in the league.



Besides these features, it also includes:

- 4) A page of further information on what power is, how it has been theorised by thinkers such as Nietzsche and Foucault, and what categories of power the site itself is based on (see Fig 2 above).
- 5) A page listing help and advice for users.
- 6) The facility for visitors to the site to request a profile to be removed, particularly if a photo of them has been added without their permission.

## 7.2 Additional resources

For the trial at the South Wales comprehensive, extra resources were produced to support the use of the World Power League. These included a number of images of famous powerful figures from the past and the present — 'Power Posters' — as illustrated in Fig 5 below:



Fig 5: 'Power' posters used in trial

These images were shown to students and discussed as a whole class prior to using the World Power League in order that they might begin thinking about various different uses and abuses of power, what it means for someone to have power, and how they gain power.

### 7.3 Role of researcher

Ben Williamson, researcher from Futurelab, ran the trial day acting as 'teacher'. He described the objectives for the sessions, led all activities, and invited class members to join in all discussions.

It was described to the class that they were involved as participants in the evaluation of a new website produced by two artists in London, that they were among the first 50 people ever to use the site, and that their comments (positive and negative) would assist the artists to understand how effective their website was and to be able to make modifications. The students were encouraged to be honest in their feedback.

It must be noted, however, that many young people do not like to appear impolite when responding to researchers, which can preclude them from voicing criticisms.

## 8. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### 8.1 Process of working with young people

Overall, the aims of the project changed from intended 'co-designed with children' to something more like 'conceptually-informed by children', though this is certainly no bad thing. Many of the responses of the children to the tasks set in the workshops indicated an interesting awareness of issues of citizenship, politics and power. In the initial workshop, the students were asked to locate themselves on a 'physical slider' to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a number of statements, including 'The borders of the UK should be completely open to immigrants', 'Everyone should go to university', 'The age of consent should be the same for gay people as for straight people', and 'I am political'. Comments included:

<p><b>Immigration</b></p> <p>"If there's an opportunity in another country then they should just take it"</p> <p>"There are good points and bad points about immigration. Good points is that they do the jobs that no one else wants to do. But the bad side is they take jobs from people who live here already"</p> <p>"Immigration is OK to a certain extent but it'll have to stop, because we're already over-populated. [missed a bit] one problem is that the school system might just collapse 'cause there's too many people in it. The country could become third-world"</p> <p>"England is trying to make up for its ancestors' mistakes by accepting everyone in from all different countries, but now it's getting out of hand"</p>
<p><b>University</b></p> <p>"Education is power. You wanna have fun when you're having an education. Some people think getting drunk is fun and what you should do at university, but when I think it's fun is when you've studied and got qualified to get a good job"</p> <p>"If you've got the intelligence you should go"</p> <p>"Where's the equality in everyone going to university?"</p> <p>"It's up to you innit"</p> <p>"If everyone goes to university there will be less room in classrooms and we'll need more teachers"</p> <p>"Everyone should have the opportunity to go but not everyone should get in. You don't want half-arsed people in there"</p>
<p><b>Age of consent</b></p> <p>"People don't really pay attention to the age of consent anyway. I can have sex with my boyfriend whenever I want and no one's going to know anyway"</p> <p>"Gays have the same rights as everyone else"</p> <p>"Age of consent don't make sense 'cause it means a gay man can't have sex til 5 years after a straight"</p> <p>"The age of consent is rubbish, 'cause if you're still a virgin and you're 19 already there's going to be a lot of peer pressure and you're going to be more self-conscious. So you might just have sex with anyone as soon as you can 'cause of the peer pressure but if there was no age of consent then there's less pressure on you"</p>
<p><b>Political</b></p> <p>"What does that mean?"</p> <p>"You should just choose to do what you want when you need to"</p> <p>"I should just get on with school instead of being political"</p> <p>"Whatever views I have I can't do jack-all about them now"</p> <p>"Certain things affect communities and countries and you need people to push things along and lead them"</p> <p>"In the sense of voicing my opinion I'm political and being able to speak my mind, rather than party politics"</p> <p>"I voice my opinion and I fight for what's right. [mentions enjoying debating, arguing] I'd like to do some good for my country but I can't 'cause I have no authority"</p>

In other sessions, students drew images of their 'ideal world leader', coloured and annotated a map of the school to illustrate where power was located, and produced concept maps clustering acts of citizenship and politics.

All documents emerging from these sessions were reviewed during the Easter break 2005, with the concept and initial designs for the World Power League emerging during a two day brainstorming workshop with Lucy Kimbell, Barby Asante, George Grinsted and Rachel Collison. Two Futurelab staff, Ben Williamson and Jo Morrison, briefly attended this workshop, where it was clear from the items produced by the students that the weekly sessions had been productive, and that the project team had developed a usefully complex view of the existing understandings and future needs of the students, regardless of their often difficult behaviour.



## 8.2 Students' self-reported evaluation of the application

### 8.2.1 How engaging and interesting did students find it?

According to the questionnaire responses provided by the 21 students at the South Wales school trial site, the majority of them found the World Power League an interesting application: of the 21 responses received, 15 found it either really interesting or quite interesting. The table below provides the full response.

How interesting did you find using the World Power League?	No (n=21)
Really interesting	4
Quite interesting	11
It was OK	4
Not very interesting	2
Boring	0

The students were also asked if they would be likely to use the site outside of school. This question was designed to discover students' likelihood of revisiting the site after the trial date. From the table below, 11 students stated that they may revisit the site; five said they were quite likely to.

Would you be likely to use the World Power League outside of school?	No.
Very likely	1
Quite likely	5
Maybe	11
Not likely	3
Definitely not	1

There was space provided on the questionnaire for students to write down what they most liked and least liked about the program, and what they would like to see changed about it. Comments provided are reproduced exactly as they were written by the students in the table below:

Most liked features	Least liked features	Proposed changes
Able to put your own face on their	Gets a bit repetitive after a while	Better cartoons
Appearance	Hard to see 'Challenged' in League page	Better cartoons
Different peoples views on power	It got a bit boring and losing	Better cartoons – better celebrities
I got voted for	It's a bit repetitive after a while and there is only one thing to do	Colour of website
I got voted for	Loseing	Coulers
Looking at the league and seeing what people think	Not clear menus	Delete happyboi
Looking at what other people think power is + the different people they chose	Not much to do. Didn't know what to do at first	Easier to read menus
Making your own people	Nothing	Have different hair colours for pictures
		Have the pictures of celebrities

Put own person or	Nothing	I think you should not be able to vote against me
Seeing Hitler against Homer Simpson	People like 'happyboi' hes WAY TOO happy!	Make other things to do on it
That is competition	People like Happy Hippy	More activities
That you can vote for people	People voting against me	More activities eg puzzles, games, pictures
The addictiveness of it	Pictures could be a little bit bigger	More people
The fact that anyone can vote	Pictures could be bigger	More people
The fact that you can put yourself on it	That you have to vote in couple and cant skip certain matches	More people
The voting		Nothing
Voting	The cartoons	Other stuff to do on the site as well
Voting	The cartoons arnt that good	
Voting for myself	The colours were mixed	The above [you have to vote in couple and cant skip matches] and some of the pictures you may choose from
Winning	The website name is too long	
	Very addicting	The cartoons, they could be better. The grey background
		You should vote at bottom of manifesto so people will read or scan at least before voting

The two case study participants filmed throughout the trial provided quite distinct responses on the questionnaire and in their observed interactions with the program. Matthew reported finding the website "really interesting" while Kathryn chose "not very interesting". Kathryn's comment on the questionnaire was that there was "not much to do" and that she "Didn't know what to do at first"; she added that it would be improved by adding "more activities eg puzzles, games, pictures". From the video data of Kathryn using the website, it is clear that it fails to interest her sufficiently. Less than one minute after starting to use it, she can be heard to say, "Do you just keep clicking?", which she then repeated. For a minute after that she clicked through the duels very quickly, rarely using the Google Me function, asking questions or otherwise commenting. (It is worth noting that Kathryn regularly looked at the camera behind her shoulder and mentioned its presence several times; one boy sitting nearby can be overheard commenting that "This is the quietest I've ever heard Kathryn," suggesting that her behaviour had been strongly influenced by being recorded.) During small group discussion with her peers, too, Kathryn made no comment at all, and during the afternoon session of the trial only sporadically clicked through duels.

Field notes written during the trial, however, record generally high levels of engagement, with most children appearing to be interested in the website, able to understand what it required of them, and able to navigate around it effectively. Once it had been explained to them, none of the students reported that they did not know what to do.

Matthew was a particularly enthusiastic user, often remarking on the league to his peers; he was also a fluent and confident speaker during the whole-class discussions. Late on the tapes of the afternoon session, he can be heard saying, "It's just such an amazingly random idea, isn't it, this website," while laughing. In the interview, he claimed that it was the incongruence between the people in the league that he particularly enjoyed about it; similarly, on the questionnaire he wrote that what he liked best about the website was "Seeing Hitler against Homer Simpson".

Students were asked to write down on the questionnaire form what their favourite program or website had been that they had used in school during Year 10 (this question was intended to survey what sort of computer-based educational activities the students enjoyed); four of them reported the World Power League amongst their favourites. Seven students reported that the best program or website they had used in school was PowerPoint. Responses to a tickbox question asking them to indicate how often they used computers in school revealed that three students use computers at school every day, and 17 others a 'few times a week'. Use of computers in this school is, then, not insignificant, and it is positive that some students thought the World Power League was amongst the best educational applications they had used.

Additionally, they reported what their favourite programs or websites that they had used at home in the previous 12 months were. Fifteen of the 21 responses included MSN Messenger, indicating that the majority of these students are familiar with and like using computers to maintain communications with friends or family. Twelve students reported that they use a computer every day at home; five more reported using a computer at home a 'few times a week'.

### 8.2.2 Design and usability

In terms of their rating of the look-and-feel of the site, 17 students thought it was good or very good, as illustrated in the table below:

Please rate the look of the World Power League website	No (n=21)
Very good	7
Good	10
OK	3
Poor	1
Very poor	0

Elsewhere on the questionnaires, however, a number of students commented that they did not like the colour scheme, particularly the grey background and the cartoon icons – something reflected in the additional trial carried out at the London site reported in Appendix 1. During interview, two boys from South Wales also pointed out that the inclusion of photographs rather than cartoon icons was likely to influence votes:

**Boy 1:** It also had an impact that there was an image next to it, a picture, it made you want to vote for it  
**Researcher:** How do you mean, 'cause most, in fact almost all the people on it have like these cartoon icons  
**Boy 1:** A few other people have put pictures on there, it makes you want to vote for them more  
**Res:** They've actually put a photo on there do you mean  
**Boy 1:** Yeah  
**[pause]**  
**Boy 2:** If there's two people [pause] if one's with a picture it definitely catches your eye

There is, then, a clear need to address the issue of the imagery used on the website. Although the decision to not include photographs of well-known celebrities was based on licensing problems, this fundamentally changes the character and appeal of the website.

In terms of usability, 13 students found the site very easy to use, and eight found it quite easy to use; nobody thought it was hard. In her interview responses and from the video data, however, our case study student Kathryn reported not understanding what she was supposed to do when she started using it, though this was perhaps attributable to the instructions provided. At one point early in the session, one of the boys sitting nearest to Kathryn demonstrates to her the League page, saying, "That shows how everyone's voted." The other case study participant, Matthew, understood immediately how to use the site, and did so enthusiastically. Matthew also noted the Google Me link very soon after opening the website, and, during the morning session particularly, referred to it regularly.

<b>How easy or how hard did you find it to use the World Power League?</b>	<b>No. (n=21)</b>
Very easy to use	13
Quite easy to use	8
Not easy or hard	0
Quite hard to use	0
Very hard to use	0

### **8.2.3 Students' educational perception of the prototype**

Space was provided on the form for students to write down what school subject they would expect to use the World Power League in. Eight of them wrote that they would expect to use it in PSHE, and seven in history. This may reflect two things about the school itself as well as the students' perception of the program: the first session of the trial day was usually timetabled as PSHE, and the school does not teach citizenship as a discrete subject but as part of PSHE and history jointly.

<b>If the World Power League was finished, what school subject(s) would you expect to use it in?</b>	<b>No.</b>
PSHE	8
History	7
IT	6
Business studies	5
Geography	5
RE	4
Media	1
Any	1

In the interviews students were also asked if they thought they had learned anything new or thought about issues that they would not normally think about while using the website. Students who responded to this question said they thought they had learned a bit about powerful personalities that they had not known much about before.

### **8.3 Can the World Power League (be used to) support young people to think about and discuss what sort of power famous figures have, and what discussion responses does it stimulate?**

The students in the trial seemed to find it difficult to talk with much clarity about the varied sorts of power that are exercised by people in particular roles, though part of this may be attributable to their shyness when responding to questions from an unknown adult researcher.

The teacher present during the morning session did confirm that the class were being rather more quiet than usual; by the afternoon session, they were much more talkative.

However, when asked to respond to the Power Posters to explain what sorts of power figures including Hitler, Geldof, Madonna, and David Beckham possess, several students did offer their opinions. Several students easily identified Geldof's current power as the spearhead of the Make Poverty History campaign and Live8 concert. One student believed that Madonna is a good role model for women, as she is seen as headstrong and determined to get her own way. Hitler's power, one student said, was that he had changed history by starting World War II and by exterminating Jews in the Nazi death camps.

During one of the interviews at South Wales, students were attempting to describe what they thought was meant by the term 'power' that helps to illustrate their views towards different sorts of power:

**Boy:** Control over other people

**Girl 1:** The authority to make people do what you want

**Researcher:** The authority to make people do what you want?

**Girl 1:** Well what you think is the best thing for people

**Matthew:** Being able to persuade people to follow your view -

**Girl 1:** Influence

**Matthew:** - yeah influence people's views, thought, so your view comes out looking the best

**Girl 2:** Getting people to change or do things without that much effort. Like if someone comes up to you in the street and asks you to donate money to this charity and you might say "uh no go away" but if a famous person does it then they're like "yeah ok here's a tenner"

**Girl 1:** True

**Res:** We've seen quite a lot of that recently haven't we

**Girl 1:** Yeah we were talking about like David Beckham being powerful but I think it's mainly 'cause a lot of people look up to him, kind of success and everything and like he's powerful 'cause he can influence a lot of people

Later in the same interview, they were attempting to explain examples of power that they thought had affected the world, the UK, and themselves:

**Researcher:** Can you think of any examples of power that have affected the world

**Boy:** Terrorism

**[pause]**

**Res:** Can you think of a specific example

**Boy:** Well the bus attack by al-qaeda

**Res:** And what affect do you think that's had

**Boy:** Sort of big impact on people and families who've been affected by it

**Girl 1:** And also on the people who are kind of generalised into the whole Muslim [pause] like [pause] that they're like [pause]

**Girl 3:** They get discriminated against for hatecrimes

**[edited]**

**Res:** You've given an example of something that affects our country. Does it actually affect the world

**Boy:** Yeah 'cause other countries are allies with each other and they have to get involved and that causes wars

**Matthew:** It could lead to more like war against terrorism to continue

**Girl 1:** Like nine-eleven

**Girl 2:** At the same time the war against terrorism could've led to the bombs in London

**Matthew:** Exactly

**Girl 2:** The Twin Towers attacks and then the [pause] in Israel and whatever it is and then the train attacks here

There were also, throughout the course of the day, a number of other comments related to the bombing of the London Underground system just days before the trial, with students identifying how terrorists have a great deal of power in the current climate.

Students did, then, need to be supported and coaxed into discussing these issues; they are not necessarily automatic responses, although, as discussed in section 8.4 below, some students were surprised to see that their peers were tending to vote for more overtly political figures rather than opting for more obvious and well-known pop culture personalities.

#### **8.4 Can the World Power League (be used to) support young people to create democratically produced, shared representations of their value systems and beliefs about who should have power, rather than who does have power, and how do young people respond to this?**

The 'every vote counts' function of the website, which immediately updated the league according to votes cast, worked very well, allowing the students to see what sort of vision of power relations they shared as a class. All students seemed to understand how this mechanic worked, and were often excited by seeing how their collective votes were changing the line-up. In interview, four students (including Matthew) responded to questions about what interested about this:

**Girl 1:** It was quite interesting seeing the actual table, of it, in order

**Girl 2:** Seeing what other people think

**Researcher:** Why did you think it was interesting, looking at the table

**Girl 1:** 'Cause I'd never really looked at that kind of thing before, to see what people think in relation to me

**Res:** Did the way the league ended up fit with your sort of values or with what you'd choose

**Girl 2:** Sometimes, like with Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King and Tony Blair, but not [pause]

**Res:** Did it tell you anything about the class as a whole, seeing that?

**Matthew:** I thought it was quite strange how there wasn't any like media or actresses in the top, 'cause I would've thought people would've gone for them over like the political figures

**Res:** Why would you expect that

**Matthew:** Well when we talk you talk more about films and music rather than what's happening in politics, that sort of thing

[edited]

**Boy:** It's good to see like how the world would look if we were voting

**Matthew:** It shows the different types of power 'cause it's got the political figures but then you have the actresses and singers who have more of an impact on younger people, role models rather than actual power

[pause]

**Girl 1:** I thought, like Matt said, that more people would go for the famous instead of political people, the more famous sort of media just because they recognise them and know what they do but [pause] yeah

It would appear that using the World Power League in the context of this session in South Wales did manage to promote students' engagement with issues of some complexity. While it is acknowledged elsewhere in this report that most students did tend increasingly to play the league as a popularity contest, particularly once they had submitted themselves to the league, they were at least part of time engaged in noting the views of their peers in relation to their own views. This, then, suggests that the league could be used productively as a classroom tool to allow students to begin interrogating the shared and divergent views and values that exist within as well as between groups of young people. There is scope for a fascinating research

project on how groups of students and young people operating in different socio-economic contexts create their representations of how power ought to be in the league.

At times, the video tapes also reveal that the students were engaging in private dialogues about some of the personalities in the league. One of these was an argument about whether Saddam Hussain is still strictly the president of Iraq, another was a series of complaints about George Bush's position high in the league.

These moments are tempered by others during which the students are clearly doing nothing more than voting as if in a 'popularity contest': both case study participants can be observed on the video tapes clicking through duels very quickly, or simply listing out loud the names presented in each duel, with others in the room overheard making statements such as "Ah I got to go for Jackie Chan" or "Tony Blair or Bill Gates, I'll have to go for the money there". Often, then, students were making decisions informed by their existing knowledge about these personalities, although from researchers' observations, a number of students were using the Google Me function regularly to find out more about personalities they did not know. One boy commented that:

"I also thought it was good you had the Google sign underneath so you could like find out more [pause] if you didn't know who to go for you could have a look at [inaudible] or what they'd written"

At the end of the first session of the main trial, the top 5 emerged as 1) Nelson Mandela, 2) Bill Gates, 3) Martin Luther King, 4) Virgin Mary, and =5) Tony Blair and George Bush. The bottom two were Victoria Beckham and Eminem.

When asked to work in small groups to provide explanations for the emergence of this league, students provided some interesting responses indicating engagement with issues of power and power relations. Mandela and King's position in the top 5 were defended for their work in anti-apartheid and racial equality respectively, as well as their position as role-models for black people and other oppressed groups around the world, eg:

**Boy** [speaking about Nelson Mandela]: He was one of the main people against apartheid and that did a lot for racial things

**[edited]**

**Boy 2** [on Martin Luther King]: He's a good role model again. For black people in the world

**Boy 3:** He's stopped blacks being discriminated against

Bill Gates (something of a surprise at no 2) was defended for his philanthropic donations to AIDS/HIV campaigns and medical work in Africa. As one boy stated during whole-group feedback, "He's got more money, and he gave lots of it to Africa and stuff". It should also be noted that Gates had appeared only days earlier at the Live8 concert in Hyde Park, praised by Bob Geldof for humanitarian and educational work through the Gates Foundation.

Asked what they thought of Virgin Mary's position at no 4, one student responded "Well she did give birth to Jesus". Pressed on what sort of power the Virgin Mary might have in contemporary society, another student pointed out that she was "To do with Christianity". No students offered to elaborate on this point, which would be interesting for follow-up by a teacher in potential work related to the league.

At first glance, the appearance of both Blair and Bush in the top 5 would seem to suggest that some students were voting on the basis of who they thought *was* more powerful, rather than who they thought *ought* to be, especially given that a number of comments could be heard around the room criticising the wars in Iraq and on terror. However, a number of students pointed out that although the actions of these two leaders are often heavily criticised, they are both in positions of extreme power that provide them with opportunities to make radical

changes at a global level, and that in Tony Blair's case there was significant evidence from recent coverage of the G8 summit that he was working very hard in the interests of ending world poverty. During informal discussion with the researcher while using the league, one boy noted that not everyone disagrees with the war in Iraq or the war on terror; for this reason he was unsurprised to see Blair and Bush near the top of the league.

When asked about Victoria Beckham and Eminem's positions at the bottom of the league, the responses were generally in agreement with this statement from one of the girls: "Cause they haven't done anything to benefit anyone". This would seem to indicate then that the students generally conceive of power as something that should be used to the benefit of others. It is not clear whether the students had considered the sorts of power that these two popular figures might actually have. During one of the other interviews, three students also described why they thought Eminem had not received many votes:

**Boy:** Nobody really likes Eminem [inaudible] his lyrics are quite controversial  
**Girl 2:** Yeah the image in the media of him isn't that good  
**Girl 1:** You wouldn't want him running the country 'cause everyone would like be running around with guns

It is very likely that in other contexts Eminem would have received far more votes (indeed, during initial pilot and usability sessions at the London site Eminem was generally a popular vote); the young people in South Wales, of course, comprise a particular socio-economic group, with their own values and beliefs. Again, this suggests an interesting starting place for a research project on the alternative views of young people towards power relations that could be based around activities in the World Power League.

During the afternoon session, when all students had added their own personal profiles and manifestos for power to the league, the response was extremely excited. The students were, for the most part, animated and talkative, with constant discussions taking place across the room as they asked each other to confirm their usernames, encouraged others to vote for themselves, and shouted out their positions in the league. One notable drawback at this stage was that most of the children were more interested in the league as a representation of their popularity in the classroom – with a potentially damaging implication, although this was not observed during this trial, being for any student who receives very few votes. During the afternoon video recordings of Kathryn and Matthew, who were sitting next to each other, the following exchange occurs:

[There is lots of talk in the room; statements including "I'm gonna vote for you, "I'm just gonna vote for [name]", and "I want to win I want to win" can be overheard]  
**Matthew:** Are you Leo16?  
**Kathryn:** No  
[pause]  
**Kathryn:** I'm Commando  
[pause]  
**Kathryn:** He's got cool glasses on  
**Matthew:** [calling across room] Oooh Charlie I'm stuck in a cross between you or Becky  
**Kathryn:** Vote Charlie. [voice rising] Vote Charlie  
**Matthew:** I'm going to vote for who has the best manifesto  
**Kathryn:** No. [short pause] Matthew. [short pause] Vote for Charlie

This exchange perhaps best illustrates the differences between these two case study participants: Matthew is playing the game thoroughly by voting on the basis of manifestos provided, while Kathryn is playing the popularity contest rules by insisting on votes for friends. There are also a few humorous statements from the students that can be overheard on the tapes, including "Wow I'm equal with the Pope" and, from one girl, "Oh why don't this have Wales on it, I'm Welsh and proud of it", and "I'm at the top of the powerless people, man".



Though superficially amusing, these statements could again become potentially useful springboards for discussions about religious power, nationality, and powerless groups. The students' use of the league during the afternoon, then, tended towards playful popularity contest, although it is certainly no bad thing that the website still managed to maintain the interest of most well into their second full hour with it in one single day. It is likely, however, that any subsequent use of the site would need to be structured carefully with a number of achievable outcomes in order to keep students focused on the actual issues to hand, rather than simply defending their popularity.

### **8.5 Can the World Power League (be used to) support young people to think about and discuss how power operates at local and personal levels that have an everyday effect on their schools, communities, families and themselves, and what discussion responses emerge?**

Many of the personal profiles that the students submitted to the World Power League indicate some interesting tendencies when considering what sorts of uses of power they would wish to represent. Their written manifestos primarily fall into two categories - those that are humorous and playful, against those that display more overt awareness of citizenship and power issues. Examples from the first, playful category include:

"Giveing golf memberships to all!!!!!"  
"vote for me or ill kill u"  
"because i will give everyone in poorer countries free pieces of cheese if they vote me world leader"  
"because i am from wales"

Examples from the second, more earnest category include:

"i would help to stop poverty around the world and make the world a better place to live in"  
"WE ARE ALL THE SAME WE SHOULD BE TREATED WITH RESPECT! I WILL DO THAT AND ALSO I WILL END RACISM!!"  
"I would make and end to all the poverty in africa and find a end to all the terrorism in the world..."  
"Food is a process of life-One of which some don't have-Money is needed i am willing to donate my power for others to have life"  
"My promise is to get racism off the streets"  
"I will work to end all religious, racial and stereotypical hatred in the world"  
"because i will help the make poverty history campaign, and get involved in the local area to improve social amenities for younger people, because there is nothing to do!!"  
"fighting for whats right... in a bid 2 c a better world... less talking more doing... enough of the small talk... words for inspiration"  
"i will make the drinking age legal to 16 and i will close down mcdonalds"

Others mix these two modes:

"I am Princess Bekki of the penguins.I will lower the legal sex age to 14 i will stop all discrimation and bullying.Everyone will have freedom of speech"  
"All people are equal... except for you... you are the best"

Some of these manifestos can also be seen to re-state existing manifestos from, for example, the Make Poverty History campaign. It is, therefore, difficult to tell in many cases whether the students may have been primarily writing what they thought was expected of them, rather

than stating anything they genuinely felt strongly about. It is likely that in the context of a structured scheme of work, or in potential future trials, students would respond better if they were asked to draft manifestos related directly to their day-to-day experiences in their local communities instead of writing generic 'right on' statements.

During the interviews at the main trial site in South Wales, when asked to describe an act of power that had affected them personally, one of the female students mentioned the Make Poverty History campaign:

"Well the whole campaign is kind of affecting everyone really 'cause everyone's talked about the whole policy but then now something's actually being done a lot of people are willing to back it up [pause] they just wouldn't have started it off themselves"

This statement, interestingly, identifies one of the initial theoretical distinctions from the World Power League proposal: that certain 'political acts' such as supporting charities might be seen as acts of routine citizenship. It also, however, demonstrates some awareness on the part of this student that everyday citizenship can be profoundly affected by global issues.

It was interesting to note that when students were asked about what sort of power they have as individuals, few spoke about relations of power in the home or in peer groups, in school or in their communities; one girl mentioned "My parents" as an affect on her personal life. In the north London trial one student said that she liked the inclusion of 'normal' people, and thought this might inspire people to think about their own personal power.

Some of the students were able to talk very interestingly about different modes of power. One boy commented that, "This might sound a bit strange, but I have power over the chair I'm sitting on". Another commented, "You might think this sounds sick, but if I wanted to I could kill someone". These boys both, then, were aware of quite different, even subtle, accounts of power, including issues related to physicality.

## **9. ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **9.1 Effect of involving young people in the design and development?**

The workshop sessions were an invaluable component of the design of the application, assisting the developers in their understandings of their target user group, of these students' existing understandings about power, citizenship and politics, and in motivating the significant production of materials by students which could then act as stimulus for subsequent design work by the team. Although ambitious plans to recruit these students as 'co-designers' were abandoned it is clear that their contributions as 'informers' have been integral to the process of designing the web environment.

### **9.2 How well did the application support young people to identify and engage with issues of power, politics and citizenship?**

It was clear from both the main trial in South Wales reported here and in the subsequent northwest London trial that using the World Power League generated significant enthusiasm and engagement amongst students. Most thoroughly enjoyed using the voting function, found it easy to understand, thought the concept was unique and interesting, and liked particularly its humorous approach to a very serious topic.

Most of the students were able to identify and respond intelligently to some of the issues raised by use of the website, including discussing the uses and abuses of power by world leaders and the role of leadership in important moments of history, and it occasionally

promoted spontaneous discussion about issues such as the war in Iraq and the war on terror. There was some evidence of students using the Google link to investigate the personalities presented to them in order to make more informed decisions during 'duels', although this tended to tail off. In the additional north London trial, students reported much more appreciation of this link. Several students in the South Wales trial did report during the group interviews that they thought they had learned a little bit about people in positions of power that they had not known before from using the Google link.

The students found the league representation of their votes interesting, and it stimulated some intelligent responses. Some were able to justify the positions of particular personalities with clear understandings, including some surprisingly complex justifications for strong votes for Tony Blair, George Bush and Bill Gates. They were able to identify how the results of the leagues represented the alternative perspectives present in the classroom, and were sometimes surprised by these results. This would suggest that there is potential for the World Power League to be used to support aspects of the citizenship curriculum.

Greater attention to the results in the league by students will be needed if the website is to promote reflection on what they are learning from it. If students are able, for instance, to analyse voting trends then they might be able to extrapolate some interesting conclusions about congruencies and departures in the electoral preferences of their peers.

Students were generally motivated by being able to include themselves as candidates in the league, although this led to much more of a 'popularity contest' than a considered debate over students' manifestos. It should also be noted that a potential side effect of this mode is the possibility of some students receiving no votes, or being voted against, which could cause upset. However, most students were inspired to use the site by the idea that they were in a competition, and this functionality should prove effective in engaging young students in explorations of power if its use is designed appropriately.

### **9.3 How well did the application support users' development of their active participation as citizens?**

There was little evidence that the students in the trial were making much connection between notions of power and their own personal, social and cultural lives. Their manifestos all tended to emphasise issues of global power and citizenship, and although this is no bad thing, the website needs to promote them to explore power in more focused, pragmatic senses. In terms of thinking about how the website might be used in schools, students could put forward manifestos as junior candidates for their local areas; the league could even be used as an instrument for electing school councils, as per Ofsted-approved school council elections. However, it is not unreasonable to conjecture that, in a structured environment, students would be able to create nominations for themselves or others that identified specific local issues and potential courses of participation for acting on these. This supports the idea of the World Power League being used to support young people's identification of potential areas for their involvement in political acts or as active citizens.

### **9.4 Concluding remarks**

Overall, use of the website did begin to stimulate the students to identify issues of power at international, national and local levels, although more structured activities would be able to promote further engagement with these concepts.

It also began to promote the idea of students as active members of a community responsible for influencing an electoral vote. They felt that their actions 'counted', and were able to begin to note where their opinions and preferences converged with or diverged from those of their

peers. Again, more structured use of the application should allow students to begin considering alternative perspectives.

Use of the application in two separate school contexts indicates the need for attention to the very different social, economic and cultural contexts within which children act. It is clear that understandings about citizenship and power and politics can vary across different contexts. The World Power League may have the potential to allow students located in different geographical, cultural and economic locations to share and compare their views about what it means to be a citizen experiencing relations of power and the influence of politics on their everyday lives.

## **10. GENERAL FINDINGS**

The findings from the study of the World Power League suggest some interesting conclusions for educational policy makers, software developers, researchers and practising educators.

### **10.1 Policy makers**

There are still few resources available to schools, digital or otherwise, which allow students to exercise their ability to participate in making decisions in a democracy. The World Power League provides young people with access to a playful, humorous and meaningful democratic space, where they are able to make decisions about the kinds of worlds they would like to live in by voting for candidates from political, cultural and entertainment spheres. Students like being able to see what sort of world they might live in if they were able to vote. Tools such as this, it may be conjectured, should be used to promote the value of participating in electoral voting, and may motivate them to be interested in more institutional democratic practices and systems.

### **10.2 Software developers**

At a superficial level, the responses of users to the World Power League have indicated that certain design schemes including lurid bright colour and use of cartoon imagery are not popular with 14 and 15 year-olds. It is possible to switch them off of a good idea and good functionality by 'dressing up' a resource inappropriately. Humour, incongruity, and unexpected surprises, however, are effective at engaging young people in serious matters that they would not normally consider interesting. The voting functionality seemed to work well in the World Power League because students often saw it as something to 'play', that is they were involved in a form of competition in which each of their actions had a visible effect on the outcomes. There is also clearly an opportunity, if developing tools to support awareness of how votes count, that students could have access to clear representations of the results and the opportunities to perform meaningful analysis on those results, for instance by filtering them by specific criteria. This sort of functionality might then be able to promote students' reflection on the value of the voting process itself, and on the sorts of value systems and preferences that emerge.

### **10.3 Educational research community**

The trials of the World Power League have indicated that there remains a need to explore more fully young people's attitudes towards democratic participation, and particularly the possible role of digital technologies in stimulating adaptation in those attitudes and predispositions. There has been widespread identification of the rhetoric which states that young people should be involved in civic participation and that new technologies can promote this, but very few specifics describing how this might be possible. The education research community should address this, paying particular attention to the role of new technologies which support

informed decision-making while maintaining the cultural relevance and humour associated with other modes of public decision-making and voting that young people are already involved in; online polls such as amihotornot.com, and TV shows such as Big Brother.

#### **10.4 Teachers, advisors, head teachers**

Many young people like to feel that they have a 'voice' and that their views 'count' when decisions are being made that affect their social and school lives. They also often have strong and complex views on important local, national and international events. The introduction of citizenship into the curriculum should allow them to explore some of these interests and concerns. Additionally, schools should be inclusionary environments in which students have a stake, where they are consulted on matters likely to affect them. The students in the trial of the World Power League particularly enjoyed seeing how their views agreed and departed from those of their peers; it involved them in a playful democratic participation, where they felt their decisions counted, and where they could see the outcomes of collective decision-making and voting.

It is imperative, however, that if tools such as this are used in school environments to promote students to make decisions that have a practical impact on their communities or on the running of their school that they are taken seriously by teachers and senior management teams. Similarly, if controversial opinions are voiced in these sorts of environments, teaching staff must be prepared to deal with any potential problems arising.

### **11. APPENDICES**

#### **Appendix 1: Interview schedule**

Did the World Power League remind you of any other websites you have seen or used?

What is similar about them?

Can you explain what your first reaction was like when you first started using the World Power League?

Could you describe to me how you use the World Power League? ('Talking Tour' of the application)

What do you think the World Power League was designed to help you to understand?

Did you feel as though you learned anything new while using the World Power League?

If you knew a friend of yours was going to be using the World Power League tomorrow, what would you tell them about it?

When you used the World Power League this morning, [famous name] ended up on the top of the league. Why do you think s/he got so many votes from your class?

And [famous name] was on the bottom. Why do you think s/he was so unpopular in your class?

How would you describe 'power'?

Can you give me a couple of examples of power being used in different ways?

-That affects the world

-That affects the country

-That affects you

How much power do you think you have?

-To affect the world

-To affect the country

-To affect things in your town

-To affect your family or friends

How interested are you in politics?

Can you think of any recent examples of politics that you were interested in?

## **Appendix 2: Questionnaire**

Please help us to evaluate the World Power League website by spending a few minutes answering the following questions as honestly as you can.

**How interesting did you find using the World Power League?** (Please tick one box)

Really interesting

Quite interesting

It was OK

Not very interesting

Boring

**Please rate the look of the World Power League website** (Please tick one box)

Very Good

Good

OK

Poor

Very poor

**How easy or how hard did you find it to use the World Power League?** (Tick one box)

Very easy to use

Quite easy to use

Not easy or hard

Quite hard to use

Very hard to use

**If the World Power League was finished, what school subject(s) would you expect to use it in?** (Please write)

**Would you be likely to use the World Power League outside of school?** (Tick one box)

Very likely

Quite likely

Maybe

Not likely

Definitely not

**Please write what you most like about the World Power League**

**Please write what you dislike about the World Power League**

**Please write down one or two things that you would like to change about the World Power League**

**How often do you use a computer at home and at school?** (Please tick one box in each column)

Every day  
A few times a week  
About once a week  
A few times a month  
About once a month  
Less often

**If you use computers at school, what are the best activities you have done, or the best programs you have used this school year?** (Please write)

**If you use a computer at home, what are your favourite activities or programs?**  
(Please write)

Thank you! Your help is greatly appreciated.

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