Citizenship Projects 2020 - 2021 Pitfalls & Suggestions

Title 2

Break down the title to see what you really need to be doing:

Investigate whether imposing an age restriction on smart phone ownership would be a protection or a denial of children's rights. Using your findings, make recommendations on this topic to the Minister for Children and to a relevant children's organization.

***This title is **HEAVIER** on the **RESEARCH** and **LIGHTER** on the **ACTION** than some other titles – does that suit you?

Section A – Research (This is your 'Investigate' element)

This is a clearly differentiated section of the project in this title. To achieve a successful investigation, you'll need to look at both sides of the argument. I STRONGLY suggest that you divide your 'Bibliography and References' section into two distinct categories, entitled something like "Evidence in favour of restricting ownership" and "Evidence against restricting ownership". When you have gathered this evidence, decide what you feel is the best outcome based on the "preponderance of evidence". Keep a record of all sites that you have visited that provide have information (I recommend a Google Docs tab – or equivalent - that you can keep open while browsing and copy the 'url' straight across)

Once you have established your own position, you MUST bear in mind that the brief asks you to LINK this advice to specific "Children's Rights". The most obvious source of these rights is the UNCRC. So think about which specific articles of the UNCRC you specifically want to deal with, including (but not limited to…)

Article 5: Parental Guidance and the child's evolving capacities as he or she grows
Article 6: Survival and Development
Article 12: The Child's Opinion
Article 13: Freedom of Expression
Article 14: Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion
Article 15: Freedom of Association
Article 16: Protection of Privacy
Article 17: Access to Appropriate Information
Article 18: Parental Responsibilities
Article 19: Protection from Abuse and Neglect
Article 23: Children with a Disability
Article 28: Education
Article 29: Aims of Education
Article 31: Leisure, Recreation and Cultural Activities
Article 34: Sexual Exploitation
Article 36: Other forms of Exploitation.

With all of these different articles to choose from, it is my strong advice to focus in on **one specific article**. You'll need to explain WHY you chose that specific perspective in your 'Rationale' in Section A of your report.

Also remember, each of these articles could be argued **from two different perspectives** – "restricting smartphone ownership in consistent with upholding this right" or "restricting smartphone ownership is contrary to upholding this right". You need to rally your evidence to prove your point.

But remember, that's not the full extent of the research you'll need to undertake:

You'll also have to spend some time researching how to make appropriate recommendations to the Minister for Children (which can take multiple forms, that you can choose from, so long as you justify your choice).

The final research component is drawn from the word "**AND**" in the brief – you'll need to identify different a "relevant children's organisations" and select one to send your recommendations to. (There's a clear overlap here between the "Research" component of the Report and the "Action" (Section B) component of the Report. My best advice is to write up how you made the choice of agency in your Section B and make it part of the ACTION PLAN.

These organizations might include (but aren't limited to): https://www.oco.ie/ (Ombudsman for Children), https://www.childrensrights.ie/ (Children's Rights Alliance), https://www.cdi.ie/about-us/mission-statement/ (Childhood Development Initiative), https://corklifecentre.org/ (Cork Life Centre), https://cybersafeireland.org/ (Cyber Safety Ireland). For a full list of member organizations of the Children's Rights Alliance, search here: https://www.childrensrights.ie/alliance-members/all#az_top *Remember to choose the most appropriate group!

Section B – The Action Plan

The 'action' (recommendations) here is a little thin, so you will need to bolster the process to explain how you informed the decisions in your action plan. You'll need to explain HOW you decided on both the format of the recommendation and on how you decided on the Children's Rights organization that you selected. You're not talking about 'researching them' (that's a Section A discussion), but rather, the decision making process. Think in terms of 'appropriateness', 'accessibility', 'weighing pros and cons' of the different approaches and organizations.

Next you'll need to outline how you went about drafting the recommendations. Are you deciding on a 3-point plan, or a set of 10 proposals? Are they going to be ranked in order of importance, or are you going to do a 'deep dive' explaining one specific recommendation in detail? All of these proposed approaches seem legitimate, so long as you explain the process you used to arrive at that decision. Are you proposing 'guidelines' or 'legislation'? What is the exact age of the restriction you're proposing? How will those recommendations intended to be enforced?

You'll also need to explain how you undertook the drafting process for your recommendations. This will vary dramatically depending on the approach you've decided to take. Walk the examiner step-by-step through the number of drafts you got, who gave you feedback (peer-peer/teacher/parent…) and how you finalized the process? How did you send the recommendations? (Letter, email, video presentation/Zoom call).

The 'Challenges' in this section should be fairly straight forward. Were you decisive or indecisive in your choices? Did you need additional help with drafting your recommendations? You might have to be a little 'creative' with this, but explaining how you overcame the challenges should be relatively straightforward too!

The outcomes in this section will be harder. What if you don't receive any reply or acknowledgment from the Ministry, or the Children's Rights group? What conclusions can you draw from no response? (too busy? Under-resourced?) What did you learn about the process of making recommendations and getting those recommendations implemented?

Section C – The Review

This section will inevitably be far tighter on the word count, but obviously you'll be focussing primarily in on "academic skills", which will include drafting and editing, drawing together research conclusions, communication skills etc. In your "insights gained" section, you can reflect on both the issues around mobile phone usage and the process of making recommendations. Even if you've done an individual project, you'll have done some degree of 'peer reviewing' and contributing to the projects of others, and received some suggestions from the teachers/parents/or any number of other people. Chose one example to explain in detail (maybe you might even note if some of those bits of feedback ended up having a negative impact). The 'reflection' component is asking you to reflect back on the PROCESS – did you re-evaluate the plan as you went along? Were you thinking about how well (or poorly) things were going as things progressed?

Bibliography – some indicative sources to get you started!

To find relevant articles that I've been sharing for a while, look back over the 'feed' of the @khpolsoc twitter feed. You'll find lots of little gems there. Ultimately, though, if you're only relying on these articles, your research won't look unique, so you MUST locate some relevant articles of your own!

Newspaper Articles:

https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-30897751.html

https://raisingchildren.net.au/pre-teens/entertainment-technology/digital-life/responsible-phone-use

https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/jan/30/most-children-own-mobile-phone-by-age-of-seven-study-finds

https://parenting.firstcry.com/articles/harmful-effects-of-mobile-phone-on-child/ (parenting group!)

https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/children-who-own-mobile-phones-at-age-nine-perform-less-well-in-academic-tests-1.3758724 (can you track down the original report?) → https://www.esri.ie/publications/later-is-better-mobile-phone-ownership-and-child-academic-development-evidence-from-0

Government/NGO/International Reports:

https://www.gsma.com/publicpolicy/resources/childrens-use-mobile-phones-international-comparison-2015 (this is a report from a group representing the mobile phone industry – think of the potential conflicts of interest here!)

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0034/93976/Children-Parents-Media-Use-Attitudes-Report-2016.pdf A very long UK gov report, but try reading the 'Executive Summary' at least! (2016 data!)

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0034/93976/Children-Parents-Media-Use-Attitudes-Report-2016.pdf (Is this an example of 'responsible industry practice' or an elaborate sales pitch?)

Scholarly Journals: - a starting point only…

https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0199959

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6059409/

Remember, the types of articles and sources you search for will depend on the specific element of Children's Rights that you decide to focus upon