

Children's Research Centre 20th Anniversary Conference



Research for children, by children and with children

The Open University

Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

Wednesday 23rd October 2024



**Children's
Research
Centre**

CRC 20th Anniversary Conference Programme

Wednesday 23rd October 2024 – 9:45am to 5:00pm

Time	Description				
9:15 to 9:45	<i>Registration / Tea and Coffee</i>				
9:45 to 10:00	<i>Welcome – CRC Directors</i> Hub Lecture Theatre				
10:00 to 11:00	<i>Keynote 1 – Children’s involvement in education research: the influence of ethical considerations on realising children’s rights</i> Professor Carol Robinson, University of Strathclyde				
11:00 to 11:15	<i>Comfort break / move between rooms</i>				
11:15 to 12:35	<i>Parallel Session 1</i>				
	<i>Group 1.</i> Chair: (name)	<i>Young people as researchers: re-evaluating relationships and empowering youth voices in research</i> Dr Fadoua Govaerts University of Bath	<i>Interest or invasion? Managing boundaries when researching with young children</i> Verity Downing The Open University	<i>Childhood Construction as ‘competent’: a requirement for participative rights?</i> Jacky Tyrie Swansea University	<i>Children as co-researchers in longitudinal qualitative research: rights-based research through meaningful engagement and evolving capacity</i> Dympna Devine University College, Dublin

	<p><i>Group 2.</i> Chair: (name)</p>	<p><i>Pupils as Curriculum Co-Designers: Moving Beyond the Visual Representation of the Four Purposes in Wales</i> Darius Klibavicius Cardiff University</p>	<p><i>"A year seems like a really long time to wait for an interview": Young people redefining the purpose of research/methods using Whatsapp as a tool of participatory power in qualitative longitudinal research</i> Grace Sykes University of Leicester</p>	<p><i>"Until I see you next...": Co-producing messy field exits with young people</i> Huw Berry-Downs Cardiff University</p>	<p><i>Engaging Marginalized Children and Adolescents in Research as Co-Researcher During Wartime: A Palestinian Case Study</i> Heba F. Zedan Hebrew University of Jerusalem</p>
	<p><i>Group 3.</i> Chair: (name)</p>	<p><i>Voices from non-verbal disabled children to develop a well-being scale</i> Dawn Pickering Cardiff University</p>	<p><i>Metacognitive Co-Creation: Learner-Led Assessment Innovations in Special Education</i> Robyn Vincent and Flo Bessé-Jones The Outdoors School</p>	<p><i>Unlocking Voices: Child-Centred Creative Research Methods in an Ethnographic Study</i> Thi Bogossian and Catherine Wilkinson University and University of East Anglia and Liverpool John Moores University</p>	<p><i>Curating meaningful encounters in co-creative research with young people through art-and-play-FULL methods.</i> Elizabeth Ascroft The Open University</p>
12:35 to 1:40	<p><i>Lunch, Posters and Networking</i> Hub Lecture Theatre</p>				
	<p><i>Parallel Session 2</i></p>				

1:40 to
3:00

<p><i>Group 4.</i> Chair: (name)</p>	<p><i>Photo Soundscapes: blurring sociocultural and visual theories in a 'layered listening framework' to think about the expressive and participatory capabilities of documentary photography by young children with migrant backgrounds</i></p> <p>Karen Horsley The Open University</p>	<p><i>Mosaic Approach in Chile: giving voice to children and young people</i></p> <p>Paulina Jara-Osorio Loughborough University</p>	<p><i>Participatory Research: Employing visual methodologies to explore the perspectives of children and young people regarding their rights and experiences within education</i></p> <p>Clare Woolhouse Edge Hill University</p>	<p><i>Researching children's digital media use and wellbeing: exploring the use of participatory image-based methods to facilitate children's participation</i></p> <p>Nerys Defis The Open University</p>
<p><i>Group 5.</i> Chair: (name)</p>	<p><i>The research ethics tree: engaging children and young people with research ethics using an interactive tool</i></p> <p>Lucy Robinson University of Oxford</p>	<p><i>Co-constructing Translanguaging Spaces to Promote the Participation of Young Learners: A Research Methodology</i></p> <p>Sarah Beal and Dr Fotini Diamantidaki Institute of Education, University College London</p>	<p><i>Co-creative Methodological Approaches with Adolescents in Services Marketing Research</i></p> <p>Simona Radu The Open University</p>	<p><i>Sharing research voice and experiences - are we really listening to children and young people? A glimpse of the CRC Practitioner Research award addressing under-representation and active participation</i></p> <p>Kate Breeze and Sheila Butler The Open University</p>

	<p><i>Group 6.</i> Chair: (name)</p>	<p><i>Children's Lives in Changing Places (CHILL)</i> <i>Centring the Voices of Young People</i> Wendy Turner The Open University</p>	<p><i>Engaging and Empowering Young Children within Advisory Groups for Research: A Welsh Case Study</i> Sarah Chicken University of the West of England</p>	<p><i>A Participatory Approach to Explore Children's Physical Activity Experiences as they Transition into Secondary School</i> Lauren Rose The Open University</p>	<p><i>A School Day' boardgame: Co-production of a play-based method to explore children's school lives</i> Gabriela Martinez Sainz University College, Dublin</p>
3:00 to 3:15	<i>Comfort break / return to Hub Lecture Theatre</i>				
3:15 to 4:15	<p><i>Keynote 2 – Children as Researchers: Making it Real</i> Professor Nigel Patrick Thomas, University of Central Lancashire</p>				
4:15 to 4:30	<i>Close</i>				
4:30 to 5:00	<i>Drinks in Medlar and Juniper Rooms</i>				

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Keynote 1

Children's involvement in education research: the influence of ethical considerations on realising children's rights

Professor Carol Robinson, University of Strathclyde

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Abstract

The presentation focuses on the changing nature of children's participation in research and adopts a children's rights lens to explore how ethical issues relating to children's involvement in research are reflected in ethics guidance and requirements. Historically, children were seen as objects of research, where research was performed on them, and researchers sought the perspectives of adults about children's experiences. Since the publication of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN. 1989), however, children have had a right to have their views heard in relation to matters affecting them, and there has been an increasing recognition that children are capable social actors with their own autonomous views. It is now widely acknowledged that seeking children's views is vital if we are to extend understandings about their experiences and take action to enhance their lives and their wellbeing. This growing acknowledgement of the contribution children can make to research has led to research practices being far more inclusive of children, with projects focus on ascertaining children's perspectives and children acting as co-researchers and active participants in data collection and analysis. Furthermore, it is now not unusual for children to design and lead their own research projects.

This paradigm shift, from doing research on children to doing research with, or by children, has meant that changes in methodological approaches have needed to adapt in line with children's increased participation. This has added a new level of complexity in relation to ethical considerations associated with children's involvement in research. Throughout the presentation, consideration will be given to the evolving nature of children's participation in educational research and the ethical issues and dilemmas that have emerged as a result. Following a review of university ethics guidance and other related documents from a range of universities, the presentation will explore whether, and if so how, ethical issues associated with children's participation in research are (or are not) reflected within university ethics requirements. Specific attention will be given to ethical issues which feature prominently, and those which are inadequately reflected or absent from these requirements, and to the implications of this for realising children's rights within research contexts both now and in the future.

Biography

Carol is a Professor of Children's Rights within the Institute of Education at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland, UK. Prior to this, Carol started her career as a teacher and has taught in secondary schools, pupil referral units and in a college of further education. She completed her PhD at the University of Sussex in 1996. For the past 25+ years, Carol has been involved in national and international research projects. Her research interests combine theoretical and empirical work focusing on the voices, experiences, rights and empowerment of children and young people. A major focus of Carol's work has been around developing insights into issues relating to children's Human Rights Education.

Short oral presentations

Theme: Managing power relationships and facilitating empowerment

Young people as researchers: re-evaluating relationships and empowering youth voices in research

Dr Fadoua Govaerts, University of Bath

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Keywords: participatory research approaches, autonomy, co-researcher, young researchers, ethical reflexivity

Abstract

Research involving children presents unique ethical and methodological challenges, particularly in managing power relationships and facilitating empowerment. This presentation explores strategies to navigate these complexities, drawing on a participatory research project conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic involving six young people as researchers on their lived experience being home educated. The YRs collected and analysed their data and disseminated their findings in a report and in an online seminar with various stakeholders. The project highlighted significant issues, such as digital poverty and institutional barriers, which affected children's ability to fully engage in the research process. Key incidents, including a participant's choice to publicly share their data with full attribution during the early stages of data collection and the ensuing ethical dilemmas, illustrate the tension between institutional guidelines and participant autonomy.

By examining these challenges, the presentation underscores the importance of balancing ethical standards with the recognition of children as capable co-creators and experts in their fields (Lundy & McEvoy, 2012; Kellett, 2010). Practical approaches, such as transparent communication, flexible methodologies, and advocating for structural support, are discussed to ensure that children's voices are heard, acknowledged, and respected, making their research projects genuinely empowering (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015; Groundwater-Smith, Dockett, & Bottrell, 2014). This session aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on researcher positionality, ethical reflexivity, and advocates for a nuanced approach to managing the power relationship between young researchers and academics (Alderson, 2008).

The presentation will reflect on ethical practices in children's research, emphasising the need for researchers to foster environments where young participants can actively shape the research process and outcomes.

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Interest or invasion? Managing boundaries when researching with young children

Miss Verity Downing, The Open University

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Keywords: gender, observation, boundaries, respect, adaptability

Abstract

In this presentation, I will reflect on my experiences of collecting data during the undertaking of my EdD (Professional Doctorate in Education). This EdD, centred around understanding how/if children's play is influenced by gender, is titled; 'Who are you going to be in our game? Understanding how gender plays out in the Early Years'. Using a Queer Theory lens, I asked, 'How do children demonstrate an understanding of gender in their play?', 'How are children's social interactions influenced by gender during play?', and 'How is children's use of play-spaces influenced by gender?'

Unstructured, naturalistic observations of four four-year-old Nursery children and a Nursery teacher interview were employed as the main data collection tools. During the child-based data collection, I was faced with a moral and ethical dilemma. Although I had made plans and received ethical approval to talk with the children during their play in order to find out more about their outlooks, it became quickly apparent that to do so would have been invasive and disruptive to the children's play.

Therefore, I was faced with a question; do I forego potential extensive data collection in favour of the children's comfort? Of course, the answer to this question had to be 'yes'. As found in Dockett, Einarsdóttir and Perry's (2009) reflections on, and summary of, work

by Broström (2005), he suggested that “children’s rights to privacy and protection are more important than some of our adult research agendas” (p. 293). In this presentation, I will discuss how I made my decision to step-back, what it meant for my data collection, and what I learnt from this experience.

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Childhood Construction as ‘competent’: a requirement for participative rights?

Jacky Tyrie, Swansea University

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Keywords: theory, social construction, power, child rights, participation

Abstract

This paper argues that children, in particular those under the age of 8, cannot have their participative right met, unless adults and society more broadly, view these younger children as capable and competent. I argue that competency is a threshold concept (Waters–Davies & Macdonald 2022) for participatory practices with children.

This conceptual paper provides a bridge between theory from childhood Studies (Sorin & Galloway, 2006, Blundel, 2012, Jenks, 2004, James & Prout 2015) and child rights frameworks (Archard 2012, Wall 2008, Tyrie 2024). The paper is framed by the Lundy model (2007), definitions of participation by Chicken and Tyrie (2023) and the concepts of voice and listening as used by Arnott and Wall (2022). The research also draws deeply on work by Waters–Davies & Macdonald (2022) around child competency as a threshold concept, which for this paper is proposed as a prerequisite for participative rights (broadly and in education research).

The paper is theoretical in nature but is derived from empirical research with young children. The research data discussed includes Children’s Participation rights in Schools (CPIS) project (Murphy 2024), research on COVID and Young Children’s Voices (CYCV) (Waters–Davies 2024), and Participation in Early Education (PEE) (Waters–Davies et al 2023). The proposition is that social construct of children as capable is a threshold

concept for enacting participative rights within practice and research. The research presents examples from these three research projects over the last 10 years, where perceptions of adults appear to be related to child participation.

The implications of this research are that when undertaking research with children and for professionals working with children, that we must focus on adults' attitude and values towards children. The argument is that for children's participation rights to be upheld in practice, focus should be on adult's attitudes and understandings of children, and that these need to be supportive of children's competence and capability.

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Pupils as Curriculum Co-Designers: Moving Beyond the Visual Representation of the Four Purposes in Wales

Darius Klibavicius, Cardiff University

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Keywords: Children's rights, Curriculum design, the Four purposes, Pupil participation, Visual representation

Abstract

This presentation focuses on pupils' experiences and their involvement in the ongoing school curriculum reform in Wales (Donaldson 2015; Welsh Parliament 2021). It is informed by the children's rights perspective, which considers children as right holders, agents of change, and decision-makers in all matters that affect their lives (UNICEF 1989). The presentation draws on the qualitative data that were generated from the multi case study with primary schools in Wales, including semi-structured interviews with children (aged 7–11) and adults.

The New Curriculum is the statutory requirement, and it is underpinned by the Four Purposes (OECD 2020; Welsh Government 2023). Thus, many schools in Wales promote characters known as Captains, Champions, Heroes, Pals, Patrol, Squad or Super Learners to encourage pupils to achieve the desired characteristics and dispositions set out in the statutory guidelines. To explore the visual representation of the Four Purposes, the researcher examines over 200 school-level curriculum offers in Wales and proposes the following classification: 1. Welsh symbols; 2. Human beings; 3. Beings with superpower; 4. Animals, and 5. Objects/Artifacts.

Based on a "planned, enacted and experienced" curriculum framework (Marsh and Willis 2007), the initial findings suggest that children are not participants in the design of the curriculum, just participants in their experience of the curriculum. Teaching pupils about the Four Purposes is not a form of participation – it could be seen as first step towards participation in that it raises their capacity on the New Curriculum to enable them to contribute to decision-making around teaching and learning.

Research data suggest that CfW is commonly viewed as a child-influenced and adult-led curriculum. However, the researcher challenges this norm by discussing the extent to which CfW can become an adult-influenced and child-led curriculum. This can be

achieved through more empowering, collaborative, and co-constructive approaches to school curriculum design.

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Theme: Participatory research methods and approaches

Children as co-researchers in longitudinal qualitative research: rights-based research through meaningful engagement and evolving capacity

Dympna Devine, Gabriela Martinez Sainz, Natalie Barrow, Morten Greaves, Aoife Donegan, Seaneen Sloan and Olga Ioannidou, University College Dublin

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Keywords: children's research advisory groups, engaged research, collaborative data analysis, participatory methods, children's voice

Abstract

Participatory research of children's school lives has gained significant influence, in particular co-participatory research that recognises children's 'insider knowledge' and values their capacity to act as researchers. Informed by sociological research that recognises the power, agency and capacity of children as social actors and a widely accepted if not fully realised acceptance of children's rights and recognition of their status as rights holders (Martinez-Sainz, Devine, et al. 2024), these participatory approaches are common in qualitative research.

However, participatory approaches in longitudinal qualitative research are less common due to the specific challenges of this type of research. This paper introduces the framework developed to conduct participatory research in a longitudinal qualitative study with children in primary school (9-12 years old) acting as co-researchers which was part of the national longitudinal study of primary schooling in Ireland, Children's School Lives that followed two representative age cohorts in 189 schools.

Considering the challenges of authentic and meaningful participation (Moody et al, 2021; Horgan & Kennan, 2021), particularly over time, the framework addresses how to respond to children's evolving capacities through the different stages of the research process (Coad & Evans, 2008; Gillett-Swan, 2018) and how collaboration can serve as means for empowerment. We outline in the framework how the Children's Research Advisory Group (CRAG) demonstrates some of the obstacles to co-participatory longitudinal research.

The paper discusses how to enable children's collaboration over time by drawing upon the longitudinal aspect of the study to engage children in the overall research process. Findings have implications for rights-based research with children that encourages them to form and express their views in matters that concern them such as their education (Lundy & Cook-Sather, 2016) advancing a responsive participatory research

approach that empowers children as evolving and not static agents of change in and beyond their education.

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“A year seems like a really long time to wait for an interview”: Young people redefining the purpose of research/methods using Whatsapp as a tool of participatory power in qualitative longitudinal research.

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Keywords: Ownership, Whatsapp, Qualitative longitudinal, Participatory, Young People

Abstract

This paper reflects on a qualitative longitudinal project tracking young people's vaping journeys. The intention of the project was to explore changes and continuities in young people's use, understanding and experiences of vaping over time, and what this depended upon. A total of 66 interviews were carried out with young people, aged 14-18, in two phases, with 6-12 months between them. Whatsapp was used to 'keep in touch' between interviews. However, as participants took ownership of this stage, whatsapp interactions evolved to signify a shift to a much more involved participatory project. So, whilst this project was not explicitly labelled "participatory" at the outset, as defined by "gold standards", in demonstrating a willingness to adopt "values of inclusion and adaptability", complimented by recognition of participants as "experts in their own lives", it transformed into participatory work. Young people were able to take ownership over elements which were important to them; they were able to choose their level of effort or power in the process, rather than what was deemed important for them to engage in/with, as decided by the researchers in design. This supports the argument that "participatory" is not something that can be designed, but an ethos; it is more than an approach. Utilising this project as an example, I will argue for a more expansive understanding of "participatory" that rethinks not only the role of different methods, but the purpose of research itself.

"Until I see you next...": Co-producing messy field exits with young people

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Keywords: participatory, exits, propositional, co-production, RSE

Abstract

Defining field exits can be difficult; they range from slow disengagements (Thomas 2023) to explicit cuts (Høybye 2016), from flawed and awkward to dramatic and abrupt (Delamont and Smith 2023). However, too much research reduces this to a matter of procedure; a voluntary, deliberate decision (Thomas 2023, p. 76). Leaving the field is often out of the control of the researcher, determined by the timeframe, funding, and institutional ethics for a project (Pole and Hillyard 2017). Institutions rarely extend open-ended invitations to researchers; schools especially, may fear disruptions during exam periods (Pole and Hillyard 2017). There is little apparent research exploring a participatory or propositional approach to exiting the field.

This paper will draw on my doctoral research data ("Making inclusive school cultures with young people: Exploring what matters in the context of RSE"), in which my exit(s)

from and return(s) to the field were, to varying degrees, navigated and co-produced with the participating young people. Working with post-qualitative, arts-based and propositional methods, the notion of a clean cut between fieldwork and analysis became blurred as I attempted to equalise the relationship between myself and the participants. I will explore the ways in which my initial attempted “explicit cut” proved both emotionally and academically difficult; the messy notion of leaving and returning to the field; and the intricacies of navigating these decisions with young people.

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Engaging Marginalized Children and Adolescents in Research as Co-Researcher During Wartime: A Palestinian Case Study

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Keywords: children; co-researchers; participatory approach; peer researcher; advisory group; occupation; stress; coping; resilience

Abstract

Children and youth from marginalized and disadvantaged groups are significantly underrepresented in research, particularly in studies that involve sensitive issues directly affecting their lives, such as living under occupation, especially during wartime and armed conflicts. There is a noticeable gap in research conducted *with* children, rather than merely *on* them, in these contexts. This study is pioneering in Israel and Palestine as it is the first to involve children and youth as co-researchers in such circumstances, and possibly the first worldwide to do so in wartime.

The study aims to investigate the sociopolitical stress experiences and coping strategies of Palestinian adolescents living in East Jerusalem. Grounded in a rights-based

approach, this research is centered on a partnership with Palestinian children and youth ages 12–19 years living in occupied East Jerusalem, with a youth advisory group playing a key role. Notably, Palestinians living in East Jerusalem are considered residents of Israel rather than citizens. Given the unique security situation in East Jerusalem particularly during wartime, special efforts were made in the recruitment process, and the study will discuss the challenges encountered, including fear, movement restrictions, trust issues, difficulties encountered in reaching the Hebrew University, and additional concerns. Ethical dilemmas unique to the sensitive context were also addressed, particularly those related to ensuring the safety and protection of the children involved. The unstable political and security situation in East Jerusalem, marked by restricted freedom of expression and movement and excessive policing, posed significant challenges in protecting the children throughout the research process. This study not only highlights the importance of involving children in research on these critical issues but also underscores the need to carefully navigate and address these challenges while adhering strictly to ethical guidelines. The presentation will offer insights into how these challenges and ethical considerations were managed during the research process.

This project is of great importance in theoretical, practical, and methodological aspects. Importantly, insights based on this experience may have implications for worldwide research among children and youth living in conflicts with political, cultural, and ethnic complexities. It is crucial to regard children as partners in creating knowledge about their experiences as members of marginalized and oppressed groups. Therefore, the experience gained during this research can help develop rights-based methodologies with children as research partners in various countries and in the context of ethnic and national conflicts. At the practical level, this research can provide critical insights for professionals working with children and adolescents living under occupation in an area of growing social concerns and continued ethnopolitical conflict, as well as for formulating socio-legal policies.

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Voices from non-verbal disabled children to develop a well-being scale

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Keywords: non-verbal children, well-being, case study design, scale development

Abstract

This research's aim was to explore the concept of well-being for non-verbal children to test a new observational scale, in the context of them using a robotic device. Current measures do not focus on well-being for this population, currently available questionnaires are problematic, for those who cannot communicate verbally or have a learning disability and experience epilepsy, fatigue or pain (Muris et al 2003; Verschuren et al 2016). Previously, researchers have not found a valid and reliable measure of well-being for those with complex disabilities (Mpundu-Kaambwa et al 2018).

A case study design was used (Yin, 2017). Each case comprised measures, observational field notes, diaries and interviews with participants. Three visits were made to observe each child using the robotic device, where field notes were written. These were used to score the new observational well-being scale (WEBS). The diaries were kept over the period between sessions and guided the interview. The interviews and diaries were analysed thematically (Braun and Clark 2018). Ethical approval was gained, including child assent by observation of their intentional behaviours.

Ten children participated. The WEBS scale indicated that the robotic device is comfortable to use, creates an observable calmness, enables creativity to develop, and facilitates engagement with people or activities. The dairies enabled the children to have their own voice which included some drawings. The interview and diary analysis led to three themes 1. Well-being: Mood and achievements; 2. Participation: Anticipation and tolerance; 3. Physical effects: Improved self-regulation and self-care. An accessible storybook has been produced from the data.

To establish the content validity, this WEBS scale needs to be tested in a larger population in different contexts. Further research is planned to explore about the need for or the usefulness of a well-being scale with qualified staff.

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Metacognitive Co-Creation: Learner-Led Assessment Innovations in Special Education

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Keywords: participatory, action research, metacognitive, assessment, special education.

Abstract

This project aims to develop innovative assessment methods for an independent special school that operates fully outdoors, in the spirit of Forest School. The goal is to co-create assessments that align with the school's metacognitive and constructivist pedagogy, addressing the current misalignment between teaching practices and

assessment methods. Through this, the project also aims to address learner empowerment as part of the school's holistic curriculum.

Research indicates participatory methods significantly enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. Milligan (2016) highlights the role of participatory methods in creating inclusive and effective assessments. Similarly, Bang and Vossoughi (2016) emphasise the importance of participatory design in educational justice, advocating for co-creation with learners. This project builds on Kangas (2016), exploring power dynamics and self-directed learning in fostering empowerment. The school's pedagogy reflects elements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (Department for Education, 2023), where learning through play and self-paced enquiry are central and are the bread and butter of highly skilled educators.

The project will employ a participatory action research approach. The diverse research team will ensure inclusivity and relevance. Workshops will gather input and insights on assessment challenges and needs. Based on these insights, assessment prototypes will be developed and piloted, and feedback will guide iterative refinement. The final implementation and evaluation will assess the tools' effectiveness, with findings disseminated through the Campfire Council and the Junior- and Senior Leadership Teams and the wider education research community.

Ethical considerations include informed consent, confidentiality, and the anonymisation of data. Participants will be fully informed about the study's aims and methods, and their right to withdraw. Preliminary findings from the literature suggest participatory methods enhance student engagement and provide valuable insights into effective assessment design. Creative, collaborative assessments are well-received by learners and educators, and promote critical thinking and learner empowerment.

The project's implications are significant for both special and mainstream education. By developing assessment methods that align with metacognitive and constructivist teaching and learning practices, the project aims to improve learner outcomes and foster learner empowerment. The findings will provide a scalable model for adopting participatory, metacognitive assessment methods in diverse educational settings, contributing to the broader field of educational research.

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Unlocking Voices: Child-Centred Creative Research Methods in an Ethnographic Study

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Keywords: child-centred research, creative methods, ethnography, photo voice, drawing

Abstract

This presentation reports methodological findings from our study on Polish children's ethnic identity development and perceptions of the school environment in post-Brexit England.

Drawing and photo voice are widely used child-centred research methods that empower children to express themselves freely and communicate their thoughts and experiences in non-verbal, creative ways (Literat, 2013, Shaw, 2021). These methods facilitate the exploration of complex subjects, ideas, and emotions that might be difficult to articulate verbally, often leading to more authentic responses. Despite some interpretation challenges (Barker & Weller, 2003), these methods have proven effective in capturing children's voices when accompanied by discussions to understand their perspectives (Mitchell, 2006).

The study employed an ethnographic approach in a Catholic school in Southeast England, which included participant observation and a palette of child-centred methods. Fifteen Polish pupils participated in drawing and photo voice activities, facilitating an open and expressive communication channel with the researcher. Assent

was obtained from the children, and informed consent from their guardians. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. The research adhered to the principles of respecting the children's agency and ensuring their participation was voluntary and comfortable.

The sessions revealed that children were able to articulate their thoughts and feelings freely, often leading to discussions that extended beyond the immediate subject of the drawings or photographs. This provided deeper insights into their school experiences, identity, and relationships. The methods proved effective in generating authentic and detailed information, honouring the children's voices and providing an inclusive platform for them to share their perspectives. The use of child-centred creative methods has significant implications for qualitative research involving children. These methods not only generate relevant data but also create opportunities for children to discuss broader aspects of their lives, enhancing the depth and authenticity of the information.

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Curating meaningful encounters in co-creative research with young people through art-and-play-FULL methods.

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Keywords: co-creation, creative methods, participatory-action-research, researching with care, sexuality education

Abstract

This paper draws from a research assemblage with 12 students aged 14-17 to co-create sexuality education materials in Aruba. It illustrates the shapeshifting wheels of an evolving methodology that was designed with curiosity and creativity. Delivered via a series of workshops, collaborators were invited to 'hang out', respond to and get 'stuck in' with a range of arts-based activities (tailored to their creative interests, including collage, storytelling, model making and mime performance) that prompted exploration of sexuality education.

Guided by the research ethos of 'making what matters, matter' (Renold, Edwards and Huuki, 2020) we materialised these explorations into a collaborative e- zine that housed the group's artwork, stories and messages around sexuality, gender, and sexual health to share with their fellow young Arubans. In attempts to 'do research that thinks and acts with care' (Brannelly and Barnes, 2022) this methods matrix was dispersed with 'energizer' games and group discussions, which produced a play-FULL rhizome of meaningful encounters.

Throughout the process, collaborators submitted anonymous reflective diary exercises to capture their experiences of the research, which helped surfaced what mattered to them, thus providing opportunities to continually adapt the research in a meaningful way. Drawing from this bounty of experiences, this presentation offers insight into the practicalities of curating meaningful encounters within creative research with young people.

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PhotoSoundscapes: blurring sociocultural and visual theories in a 'layered listening framework' to think about the expressive and participatory capabilities of documentary photography by young children with migrant backgrounds.

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Keywords: young children's participation; migration; documentary photography; PhotoSoundscapes; Layered listening framework

Abstract

This article proposes a new theoretical and pedagogic framework, PhotoSoundscapes, for deep listening with young children from migrant backgrounds. Listening to newly arrived, often invisible, young migrant children and their families in culturally sensitive early childhood education and care (ECEC) pedagogy continues to be a most 'pressing issue' (Tobin, 2020, p.10).

Photography is one medium for exploring the thoughts, ongoing feelings, rhythms, and refrains of young migrant children's perspectives in 'pivotal moments' (Payler et al., 2016, p.18). Case studies with four, three- to four-year-old children whose parents have recently migrated to the UK were created at home and in an English nursery over the period of a year. Naturalistic data generation methods included: child-led photography and allied video recorded photo conversations; photo storybooks, semi-structured interviews, field notes and reflexive journaling.

This new theoretical and pedagogic 'layered listening framework' draws upon the research process, with child-led photography and thematic analysis to synthesise and blur a novel application of sociocultural theory and visual concepts in early childhood, documentary photography, visual sociology and art. It comprises intuitive and wise photography (Norris Webb, 2014); ambiguity (Franklin, 2020); photographing democratically (Eggleston, 2019) and 'elastic spaces' (Ghirri, 2017). Exemplars from the research discern the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the young children's competent use of photography's dynamic, democratic, participatory and expressive capabilities to render visible their unique perspectives.

Reimagined ECEC calls for attentiveness of teachers and researchers careful listening, making time for children to revisit, reconfigure and reframe their photography in novel and distinctive ways, as 'photographer-authors' (Belhassen, 2024, no page). Such possibilities challenge dominant discourses of trauma, vulnerability and deficit perspectives of diversity in culturally sensitive ECEC pedagogy.

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Mosaic Approach in Chile: giving voice to children and young people

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Keywords: children's participation, participation rights, mosaic approach, Chile

Abstract

Chile has been facing a socio-political, economic, and cultural transformation that turned out a constitutional change in which childhood is identified as an area of significant prominence. There is a debate over the position that children and young people should have in Chilean society, especially around the idea of being social subjects and protagonists of the processes in which they are subjects of intervention, being it necessary to analyse the main challenges to implementing child's participation right in its changing context.

This research examines whether it is necessary to incorporate childhood participation in public policymaking in Chile and the consequences of this aim for childhood, policymaking, and social programmes in which they are part. This research considers a qualitative approach and participative research methods such as the Mosaic Approach (Clark, 2005) that gives a proper space for the expression of children and young people who live in Chile, offering innovative tools, based on arts, to help them express their opinions, feelings, and interpretations of the reality.

Usually, theories, frameworks, public policies, and their programmes have a different becoming in local territories. Through the Mosaic Approach, there is a proper chance to hear children, young people, and professionals in a collective space, which could provide deeper understanding, reflection, and interchange of ideas from all the participants, offering a meaningful participation space in which adults intervening with children and adolescents can hear them from a different side.

It is substantial to hear children, adolescents, and practitioners who are facing the main challenges, barriers, benefits, and opportunities of childhood participation in Chile daily. The Mosaic Approach Method helped to listen to all participants from a horizontal social space in which all their opinions and feelings had the same protagonism, giving the chance to balance structural inequalities in which children and young people live in this adult-centric context.

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Participatory Research: Employing visual methodologies to explore the perspectives of children and young people regarding their rights and experiences within education

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Keywords: visual, photographs, participatory, inclusion, rights

Abstract

This presentation will offer a critical discussion of an ongoing research project which utilises visual methodologies to explore perspectives, particularly those of children and young people, regarding children's rights, experiences, and voices.

This project has been ongoing since 2013 and has involved a number of children who have produced and annotated photographs to communicate their thoughts and perspectives around a number of topics, such as inclusion, exclusion, transition, and teaching styles. These photos were 'cartoonised' to make them anonymous and were then shared with other children and teachers within school workshops and, in some instances, with the general public in an exhibition at TATE Liverpool in June 2018. Since 2021 we have been working with a number of schools to develop bespoke resources which can be used by practitioners to explore children's concerns and worries, which is so vital given the elevated rates of mental health difficulties post-pandemic.

Our intention in undertaking this work is to facilitate active engagement from individuals of all ages so that their 'voices', perspectives and experiences might be acknowledged and shared in respectful ways. In presenting our work to date, we hope to offer innovative opportunities for discourse by encouraging the often-unheard views and experiences of children and young people.

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Researching children’s digital media use and wellbeing: exploring the use of participatory image-based methods to facilitate children’s participation.

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Keywords: childhood wellbeing, participatory research, image-based methods, photovoice, children’s digital media use

Abstract

The research aims to explore familial ideas about the effect of digital media on primary school pupils’ wellbeing and aims to capture children’s voices within the family setting. Childhood wellbeing has become a prominent consideration within public, political and legal discourse, with widespread agreement on its importance. However, in relation to wellbeing and digital media there is conflicting evidence about digital media’s effect on childhood wellbeing (Kardefelt-Winther, 2017).

Previously, children’s wellbeing may have been assessed by asking parents (Gross-Manos and Bradshaw, 2022). Increasingly, children are included in research design (Fattore, Mason and Watson, 2012), and acknowledged as experts on their own lives. Research suggests that adults and children may have contrasting views: in terms of both wellbeing (Gross-Manos and Bradshaw, 2021), and in terms of digital media use (Ofcom, 2022). As a result, exploring both adult and child views are an important.

Photovoice is research based on images taken by the participants. Children within a family were asked to document their use of technology over one week by taking photographs of any aspects of digital media that related to their everyday lives. Subsequently, in order to elicit an understanding of children's meanings from their photographs, they were encouraged to discuss their photographs and present them creatively (Carter and Ford, 2013). Children could decide how to share their ideas around the emotions and values attached to their photographs of digital media use, aiming to incorporate a rights-based, participatory element to the research (Horgan, 2017).

The use of image-based methods that are less dependent on language, supports children's participation. However, image-based researchers must remember that 'both the taking and viewing of photographs are subjective' (Leonard and McKnight, 2015, p. 631). As a result, the use of images requires collaboration between the researcher and the children (Rogers, 2017). This is a process of interaction and exploration of meaning with participants (D'Amico et al., 2016; Clark-Ibáñez, 2004), with the aim of knowledge co-construction.

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The research ethics tree: engaging children and young people with research ethics using an interactive tool.

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Keywords: research ethics, ethics in practice, practical ethics, ethical research practice

Abstract

When a child or young person becomes a participant in a research project, it is often their first exposure to research. Thus, understandably, they come with little understanding of what research is and their involvement in it. Whilst research consent forms – written in 'child-speak' – are helpful, they work on the assumption that children have understood the written content and if not, feel comfortable enough to ask questions during a first meeting. This is a big ask and often leaves participants with superficial knowledge and understanding of ethical research.

Reflecting on my own practice, and inspired by the work of Edwards and their 'Case of Ethics' (2019), I developed my own 'research ethics tree'; an interactive and visual representation of the research ethics of my PhD research. In this presentation, I will begin by contextualising ethical research with children and young people. I will then move to reflecting on my experiences of developing the tree, including the rationale for each visual 'token', before sharing how it was used in small group settings with my research participants (children aged between 9–16 years old). This will include a discussion on how the tree opened a space for dialogue and questions about research. The presentation will end by inviting the audience to reflect on how they do, or could, support children's and young people's understanding of ethical research in their own practice.

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Co-constructing Translanguaging Spaces to Promote the Participation of Young Learners: A Research Methodology

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Keywords: translanguaging spaces, emotional engagement, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), young learners' perceptions, participation

Abstract

This presentation discusses the co-construction of translanguaging spaces with children in the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) primary classroom. CLIL is "a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language" (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 1). . The research focuses on young learners' perceptions of emotional engagement, more specifically on "feelings of connection or disconnection" (Philp & Duchesne, 2016, p. 56) during classroom interactions. .

Translanguaging space is conceptualised as a social space where individuals can draw on their linguistic and semiotic resources, as well as different dimensions of their identity including personal history, experiences and beliefs, to respond to their communicative needs (Wei, 2011; Garcia & Wei, 2014; Otheguy et al., 2015). Young learners often struggle to find appropriate words to articulate their thoughts or feelings (Gibson, 2012). By

creating a translanguaging space, young learners were encouraged to draw freely on their linguistic and semiotic resources to articulate their perceptions.

Data is collected during focus groups where learners reflect back on the interactions in the classroom through video recordings. Data analysis is completed through Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. A rigorous ethics process ensured informed consent (Christenson, 2004; Cocks, 2006) and participants' integrity (BERA, 2024). As a teacher conducting research in my school, cultural notions of generational power and control between adults and children found in wider society (Mayall, 2008) could manifest themselves. To mitigate this risk, I aspired to create a partnership ([Christensen, 2004; Gibson, 2012](#)) with the participants.

The research revealed that contextual factors influence emotional engagement. A key finding was the need for additional linguistic scaffolding to promote positive emotional engagement in CLIL settings. The implications of leveraging existing linguistic resources and metalinguistic strategies to support learner autonomy, mutuality and equality have the potential to inform future practice and enhance learning opportunities.

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Co-creative Methodological Approaches with Adolescents in Services Marketing Research

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Keywords: value in the experience, wearable diabetes technology (WDT, adolescents, caregivers, lived experience, co-creation

Abstract

Involving adolescents in research has been adopted in a variety of fields such as education, health, and psychology. However, within business research, studies with adolescents remain limited (Hastings et al., 2005; Gentina et al., 2018). This phenomenological project sought to extend the voice of adolescents beyond silos and pockets of participation. It is situated within services marketing research and aims to understand value in the lived experience of wearable diabetes technology (WDT) for adolescents with type 1 diabetes (T1D) and their caregivers. It considered van Manen's (2014) essential lifeworld dimensions of human experience (i.e., embodiment, sociality, spatiality, temporality, and materiality) for a holistic understanding of value (Helkkula et al., 2012).

The advisory phase of this study sought the contribution of adolescents in relation to the central topic and various aspects of research design. This initiative informed the main study which included 24 semi-structured online interviews with 14 adolescents and 10 caregivers as well as diaries collected from 6 adolescents. Data analysis followed van Manen's (1990, 2014) phenomenological approach. Ethical concerns regarding potential harm, informed consent, power asymmetry and confidentiality were mediated by employing sensitive and transparent approach, reinforcing consent, and implementing a comprehensive data management plan.

This project offered an integrated understanding of value in the lived experience of WDT. This phenomenon is viscerally lived through the body in continuous interaction with the customer's social reality, the iterative experience of time as well as the concrete, symbolic and material world which includes the synergetic technology. The research findings were informed by adolescents, providing a better understanding and a faithful reflection of value in the experience. By integrating the voice of adolescents in service research through participatory methodologies, this study promoted a multidisciplinary approach to knowledge co-creation for impactful research outcomes (McLaughlin, 2006; Nicholas et al., 2019).

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Sharing research voice and experiences - are we really listening to children and young people? A glimpse of the CRC Practitioner Research award addressing under-representation and active participation

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Keywords: participatory research, agency and voice, empowerment, reflexivity, EDI

Abstract

The Children's Research Centre (CRC) Practitioner Research Award has now run for 3 years. The Award has widened participation in research, enabling practitioners with protected characteristics to engage in practitioner research with confidence in a supportive and respectful community of practice. The project's reach, impact and value are already significant.

- Ripple effects – The CRC Practitioner Research Award positive impacts are continuously evolving, often in unpredictable ways. It uncovers new perspectives, promotes discussion, and develops new skills to think effectively about new possibilities – a way of thinking that is more holistic, systemic, inclusive and integrative. A deeper knowledge of practitioner research and practice motivations not only creates meaningful engagement opportunities but also enables the Open University and other organisations to gain from the voice and experience of our practitioners, thereby enhancing the quality and sustainability of involvement with the University and its community and supporting their progress and their communities.
- Collaboration and co-creation – The award fosters a mentorship model of knowledge sharing. Mentors are important because of their role in supporting the practitioners and shaping their research project. Mentors report the positive impact of being part of the project benefitting from co-creation with the researchers.
- Reach – The award celebrates the expertise of the practitioner researchers in their own fields and those involved have enjoyed reciprocal learning relationships.

Nine students have completed the award, and three research projects are in progress this year (October 2024). All researchers have protected characteristics including autistic students, students from IMD Q1 communities, and Black, Asian and minority ethnic students. Research has taken place in eleven different workplaces. Groups of children from each have taken part in a research project (approx. 42 children). Seven different academic mentors have supported students (8 Associate Lecturers).

Impact for children – Ethical, inclusive and participatory research projects have amplified the voices of children who are heard less often, including autistic children, those with additional needs, refugee children, children who have experienced bereavement, and home-schooled children. The presentation will offer a glimpse of dynamic, diverse and inclusive research projects. Addressing under-representation and active participation in research with children and young people, we ask the question – are we really listening to children and young people?

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Children's Lives in Changing Places (CHILL) Centring the Voices of Young People

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Keywords: participatory research and co-production, centring young people – voices, community change making

Abstract

During discussions about the kinds of multi-disciplinary approaches needed to address children and young people's wellbeing in the UK and beyond, the views of young people themselves can sometimes be absent or undermined. Through participatory action research with young people aged 10–15 in three structurally disadvantaged neighbourhoods in England, our research aims to contribute their voices to these debates. Through engaging young people as co-researchers, we have facilitated them to identify and progress change projects in each site, working with adults in the community to enhance their opportunities, autonomy and wellbeing. The research emerges from inclusive methods aimed at putting young people at the heart of the analysis, whilst situating their experiences within wider social-economic and political contexts. The paper will explore the change projects to consider what the priorities and actions generated by the young people can tell adults (from community members to decision-makers and academics) about how to address the challenges they face and the dreams they have, post pandemic and during a cost-of-living crisis. As such, young people's understandings of their own lives will be centred, recognising the complexities of navigating neighbourhood contexts of poverty, deprivation and violence, yet moving forwards with others through a strong sense of belonging, access to valued local resources and community effort and care.

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Engaging and Empowering Young Children within Advisory Groups for Research: A Welsh Case Study

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Keywords: voice, children, research, advisory group

Abstract

The paper draws on data from an ESRC funded research project which aims to understand the enactment of participatory rights of children aged 5 to 7. This presentation draws attention to the complexity of working in an ethically centred way with a children's advisory group for a large-scale research project.

The importance of supporting children to express their views and opinions, to listen to children and account for their views in decision making are well researched (Stalford & Lundy, 2022, Chicken and Tyrie 2023, Chicken et al 2024). There is also a developing field around the use of child advisory groups within research (Gaillard et al. 2018), in particular within participatory-focused research (Collins et al 2020). This literature has underpinned the development of and running of the child advisory group for this research.

This paper will outline and discuss the planning, design and enactment of a children's advisory group with a small group of primary school children. The methods used within the children's advisory groups included children's literature and artistry, the outcomes from the CAG have shaped and informed the research throughout all stages, from design to dissemination.

Our findings are a developing story throughout the research, which emerge from the dualities of understanding and relationships. This emergence reveals a conflict between the growing pressure to lead creativity within child research, through imaginative scenarios, with the development of the honest voice of children, which seems to appear through more meaningful, but relational contexts. Initial project dialogue and emerging data reveals participative opportunities exist more prominently for older and less marginalized cohorts.

As with all child related research ethical considerations related to power and ethical issues have been carefully considered, including informed consent, reduction of possible harm to participants and their right to withdraw (BERA 2015).

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A Participatory Approach to Explore Children’s Physical Activity Experiences as they Transition into Secondary School

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Keywords: participatory, children’s voices, physical activity, transition

Abstract

The purpose of this research project was to conduct an inquiry into children’s physical activity experiences as they transitioned from primary to secondary school. The aim being to ensure that the physical activity children have access to supports their mental and physical development through this critical period in their lives.

The project involved two studies. In study 1, group workshops were conducted with twenty-two year 6 children at the end of their last term in primary school. In study 2, the same children participated in additional creative, participatory workshops in which their experiences of physical activity since moving to secondary school were explored. A

participatory approach was employed as this allowed the participants to express their views, whilst working with the researcher to co-construct knowledge and develop a shared understanding (Wilkinson and Wilkinson, 2018) of their physical activity experiences through the transition.

In this presentation I will show the procedures used to keep the children's voices at the forefront from the methods through to the analysis, and the need for me as the researcher to remain reflexive throughout the process. I will outline the many considerations such as: ethics, rapport building, power balance and what actually constitutes voice. I will explore the factors which shape research encounters and how these may impact the children's expression of their voices (Spyrou, 2011), whilst also explaining what I felt constituted voice in this project and why.

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'A School Day' boardgame: Co-production of a play-based method to explore children's school lives

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Keywords: playful methodologies, engaged research, collaborative research design, participatory methods, children's voice

Abstract

Considering the time children spend in schools and the impact this time has on their present and future lives, developing a better understanding of their school experiences is crucial for those interested in childhoods and children. Such understanding must be developed from research that fully takes into account the unique characteristics of children, their evolving capacity and their rights in order to navigate the methodological

opportunities and challenges that children's marginalised and vulnerable position represent (Lundy & McEvoy, 2012; Punch, 2002).

This paper introduces the board game 'A School Day', a participatory method of data collection used to explore children's experiences of primary school and schooling. The board game was co-created with children and used with children in 2nd class (8-9 years old) in the Children's School Lives study, a national longitudinal study of primary schooling in Ireland that followed two representative age cohorts in 189 schools. This paper argues for the use of play as a methodology in classroom-based research, as an approach that fully respects children's rights and capabilities and allows them to form and express their views (Arnott & Wall, 2021; Campo, Baldassarre & Lee, 2019; Wall et al., 2023).

By acknowledging play as the universal language in childhood, play-based methodologies provide accessible opportunities for children to share their 'insider knowledge' of their experiences in school that challenge more passive methodologies. In this paper, we introduce the process of co-creation, piloting and implementation of the boardgame as a method of data collection to explore children's views and experiences related to pedagogy, curriculum and assessment.

Through this process, we demonstrate the relevance of this method in terms of accessibility, active participation and positive engagement in classroom-based research. We also explore some of the methodological challenges of this method as well as some of the ethical implications of play as a methodological approach in educational research.

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Poster presentations

Theme: Managing power relationships and facilitating empowerment

Into the woods with young children, posthumanism and critical disability theory

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Keywords: early years, forest kindergarten, disability

Abstract

This poster presents an exploration of the play experiences of four young children with additional support needs in two woodland-based settings in Scotland in order to challenge and expand ideas about play in the woods. It draws from my professional doctorate studies, which I come to as an early years practitioner and forest kindergarten/school practitioner.

Nature or forest kindergarten experiences are viewed in terms of how they benefit children's development or support their wellbeing (Johnstone et al, 2021). Studies either exclude disabled children (Prins et al, 2022) or frame their experiences within specialist settings according to a particular disability (Friedman et al, 2022). Nature is used to define childhoods and potentially exclude and silence those who are perceived to be different to unspoken societal ideals (Harju, et al 2021). While the number of nature-based early years settings in Scotland is increasing, research by a Scottish learning disability charity (SCLD, 2022) indicates that families of learning-disabled children struggle to access their entitlement to early years spaces, suggesting that nature-based early years settings may not be socially just and inclusive spaces.

My research involves participant observation using traditional ethnographic methods such as note taking, photo and films taking, but informed by posthumanism and critical disability theory. Negotiating dynamic consent and relationships with children with varied additional support needs; power relationships and politics of representation. The variety of ways of understanding and attending to children's diverse play is entangled with landscapes – materially and historical/culturally.

Research about the effectiveness of forest kindergarten on children's development contributes to an exclusive idea of their purpose. Early years practitioners need more awareness of the links between historical and contemporary framing of disability in relation to nature. Increased recognition and value of diverse ways of playing would mean greater support for diverse children's access and space for play in nature/woodland.

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Towards authentic empowerment in Children and Young Person's (CYP) participatory research: Achieving Effective Informed Consent (AEICon) and dealing with the realities of research environments.

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Keywords: children, young people, research, informed consent.

Abstract

This poster illustrates an emerging cross-Faculty project to examine empowerment in CYP participatory research. The initiative was prompted by two researchers faced with fulfilling ethical approval for their participatory research study whilst acknowledging the reality of their study environment in which parents and young people were unlikely to have engaged with participant information before signing consent forms. They questioned how 'informed' the consent they had received was or how 'effective' their communication of CYP's rights in participation had been. Sharing this concern with other researchers quickly revealed similar experiences.

Researchers contributed to identify key challenges from a broad range of experiences and across diverse topics including early years to young adults, neurotypical and special needs participants. Nonetheless, concerns were remarkably consistent. Priorities for action focused on the challenge of evidencing the sharing of substantial amounts of complex information prior to engaging with potential participants to achieve essential ethical approval for the conduct of research.

The schematic shows a tentative more effective approach to achieving informed consent. This work has involved the OU Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) as a collaborating partner, who aim to promote the outcomes on their webpages from which the whole University can benefit. This allows a visible promotion of the rights to participation (as well as protection) embodied in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 2019) for CYP. The schematic puts forward a new model of participant engagement which acknowledges that consent should be:

- Planned and ongoing throughout a study.
- 'Effectively informed' ensuring understanding before consent is given and restated.

This has led to practical operational recommendations:

- Breaking down stages of consent/assent as research journeys progress: initial contact and invitation, enrolment, engagement/data collection, dissemination of findings. Researchers would be required to demonstrate a plan for securing ongoing consent rather than preparing specific participant information and consent protocols before having met their potential participants. Participants are seen to be key to designing effective systems of consent.
- Planned ongoing effective informed consent is expected to be underpinned by planned researcher reflexivity which should be evidenced.
- Separating unfamiliar topics such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) aspects of data management being shared when most relevant to the participants' experience and understanding of research processes.

- Greater use of a wider range of auditable methods of communicating key information e.g. in voice recordings and online capture.

Work continues to now prepare tools, templates, training, and exemplar materials to support researchers. We welcome colleague support and contributions. These will be available on the OU HREC website and externally on the OU 'OUR VOICES' website:

[Welcome - Our Voices \(ourvoicesou.co.uk\)](http://ourvoicesou.co.uk).

Theme: Participatory research methods and approaches

COVID-19 and Me: Children and young people's experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown

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Keywords: creative methods, children, childhoods, COVID-19, drawings

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic and following UK lockdowns affected the UK population physically, financially, and psychologically, with varying levels of severity (Luijten et al., 2021). This PhD project focuses specifically on the experiences of children and young people aged 11-15, employing creative methods to map out their emotional journeys throughout the pandemic.

Current research explores children's experiences during lockdown (Bessell, 2021; Xie et al., 2020; Abdulah et al., 2021), revealing how COVID-19 affected children's mental health, with some children thriving while others struggled. However, there are few studies that try to comprehensively map the experiences of children and young people during the pandemic and lockdown.

This project involved six consecutive workshops, each focusing on different themes and using creative methods such as drawing, collaging, fiction writing, and LEGO. Participants could choose which method they wished to use to express their feelings and experiences during each workshop. The use of different methods highlighted various aspects of their experiences and, when explored holistically, helped merge a complex, interconnected web of their overall experience. The main ethical concern for this project was the power dynamics between participants and the researcher, leading to the creation of a 'toolbox' for fostering ethical researcher-participant relationships.

Although findings are still emerging, current results show differing experiences related to school, relationships with family members and friends, as well as conflicting emotions over the lockdown period, ranging from boredom to relief, sadness, and excitement. The implications of this project include contributing to the existing knowledge surrounding children and childhoods during crises, as well as emphasizing that some children and young people may need more support post-pandemic.

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A Lockdown Legacy? A phenomenological mixed methods investigation into the nature and dynamics of primary children's friendships

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Keywords: children's friendships, COVID-19, mixed methods

Abstract

The disruptive impact of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown measures, especially school closures, on children's learning and mental wellbeing, throughout a crucial time in their development, has been a major concern since the early stages of the pandemic (Rouse et al., 2021). Studies such as the Young Minds survey in 2020 have highlighted loneliness and social isolation as significant sources of distress among children (Young Minds, 2020). Ellis et al. (2020) emphasised that the primary worry for during the pandemic was the disruption of friendships, highlighting the importance of social interaction for their wellbeing.

In examining children's lived experiences of lockdown and their transition back to school, the project aims to understand the structural effects of the lockdown measures on the constitution of primary school children's friendships at the time and how they dealt with the challenges presented by the pandemic.

It will use a phenomenological mixed methods research (PMMR) design, whereby the philosophy of phenomenology informs both qualitative and quantitative data generation, analysis, and interpretation. This involves the researcher having to decide what aspects of phenomenological analyses and theories are front-loaded in order to

proceed with a clearly established phenomenological commitment to how to investigate the children's experience.

The intricate interaction between the researcher and the children is vital to co-generate knowledge in relation to the aims of the project. In viewing children as experts in their own lives, the Mosaic approach will be used, whereby children play a direct role in constructing and discussing research material (Clark, 2017). The repertory grid technique will also be used. Ethical approval has not yet been authorised.

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Children's Outdoor Participation: Exploring Children's Experiences and Perspectives of Accessing and Playing in Outdoor Environment

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Keywords: children's experiences, play, children's participation, outdoor environment

My study aims to explore young children's experiences and perspectives of accessing and playing in outdoor environment. In the last decade, there has been increasing attention on the themes of children's outdoor play and environments (Burriss& Boyd, 2005; Fjørtoft, 2001; Moser & Martinsen; 2010). Meanwhile, according to Article 12 from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), children should be given the right to express their views. Therefore, children have the right to express their real experiences and perspectives about outdoor play.

However, current studies mainly focus on the importance of outdoor play for children (Bento & Dias, 2017; Harte, 2013), characteristics of children's outdoor play environment

(Aarts et al., 2010; Moser & Martinsen, 2010), and/or teachers' and parents' perspectives on outdoor play (Parsons & Traunter, 2020; Rouse, 2016). Therefore, although children are the primary participants in outdoor play, their perspectives are often neglected.

This study uses qualitative, participatory methods, particularly the Drawing within Mosaic Approach (Clark & Moss, 2001) to explore children's experiences and perspectives of accessing and playing in an outdoor environment. Some parents are reluctant for their children to be interviewed and observed. I prepared a detailed introduction to the research project to ensure that parents are fully aware of the research's purpose and risks. Additionally, I contact the children's teachers to ensure that the children remain anonymous and safe. I have not got final research results I will continue to do it.

This study benefits protecting children participation rights. This study will improve our awareness of the benefits of outdoor play in the education system, especially in the future. In terms of sustainable development and a green environment, this research will provide insights from the children's perspective.

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Children and Young People as Change Makers – Co-produced participatory research: the lived experiences of growing up in an area of economic deprivation

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Keywords: young people as researchers, co-production, lived experience, areas of economic deprivation, making change

Abstract

CHiLL: ‘Children’s Lives in Changing Places’, was a two-year action research project funded by the Nuffield Foundation, working participatively with young people using a creative workshop approach across three sites in England. In Milton Keynes this was led by Dr Wendy Turner with Dr Debbie Humphry in partnership with the Woughton Community Council Youth Team led by Tash Darling.

Research Questions.

1. What role does place (the physical and social environment, as well as virtual/translocal factors) play in affecting children’s wellbeing and life chances?
2. How do children perceive and use the local environment and its affordances for their social, emotional and physical wellbeing?
3. What is the impact of wider macro socio-economic and translocal factors including digital technology on children’s leisure, social connectivity, sense of place and aspirations and how have these changed over time?
4. How do children perceive and engage with opportunities to be included and contribute to decisions that affect their lives at local, national and global levels and how can place-based social capital be harnessed to enable that?

Six key themes emerging from the research conducted and analysis done with the core co-researchers. This was based on more than 20 young people engaging with the CHiLL project throughout as co-researchers and more than 90 young people reached in the

Woughton area via creative workshops, interviews and a survey to understand their experiences and perceptions about the impact of where they live on their wellbeing and life chances, and how it has changed over time

The six key themes emerging from the research were:

1. Safety in Public Places
2. Local space not fixed, clean, managed
3. Service and places for young people
4. Wellbeing
5. Young people's futures
6. Community & belonging

The young people identified wellbeing and safety as the key issues they wanted to address through their Change Project, resulting in the Wellbeing & Safety pack/zine, which was highlighted at the exhibition/launch event; with all six themes open for discussion at the Policy Dialogue event.

At the exhibition/launch adult/stakeholder attendees dialogued with the young people and together they recorded suggestions for taking the research forward to make change. By far the most repeated call was to create spaces to listen to and act on the views of young people, who are the experts in knowing what they need to improve their lives, desirable at local, city-wide and national scales.

It was also suggested that the participatory research and Wellbeing and Safety Pack/Zine be used as a template for other areas across MK and more widely to adopt. It was felt that policy makers needed to see the areas that they make decisions about and that more funding be put into local/community-scale projects. Young people also emphasised the need to address violence reduction such as knife crime.

Key messages for national policy makers were:

- Take advice of young people and their lived experiences.
- Target funding at next set of policy makers i.e. young people.
- Outreach – go to the young people, including “troubled” young people. There were worries that even if youth council representatives were tasked with accessing the views of a diversity of other young people, that some young people most in need of support would be disengaged or excluded from this process.
- Structural intervention/resourcing: the public sector (for example, health, education, social services, youth services) were all under-resourced. This creates a reliance on the voluntary sector, which is also under-resourced.

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Keynote 2

Children as Researchers: Making it Real

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Abstract

In this talk I will be reflecting on the experience of working with children as active researchers, and on what has been the impact of initiatives like the Children's Research Centre. I will look at different models of research led or conducted by children, and at some examples of actual practice. I will consider the extent to which these projects have been successful in putting children in the driving seat, and ask what are some of the snags and pitfalls in letting children take charge of research (including issues around ethics).

I will examine some of the critiques that have been levelled at the idea of children as researchers, and consider whether some of the claims made for the practice may have been too ambitious or exaggerated. Above all I will be asking how we can make children's active participation, even leadership, in research something that is real and authentic, rewarding for those taking part and valuable in society. In all of this I will be drawing on my own experiences, on other examples, and of course on the work of the Children's Research Centre.

Biography

Nigel Patrick Thomas is Professor Emeritus of Childhood and Youth at the University of Central Lancashire and founder of The Centre for Children and Young People's Participation. He has been a social work practitioner, manager and advisor, as well as a social work educator. His research interests are principally in child welfare, children's rights, children and young people's participation, and theories of childhood and intergenerational relations. He featured in the book *Key Thinkers in Childhood Studies* by Carmel Smith and Sheila Greene (Policy Press, 2015).