

ESRC Seminar Series RES-451-26-0165

ENGAGING CRITICALLY WITH PUPIL VOICE
Children & young people as partners in school & community change

Seminar 2
**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE
& COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

SESSION PRESENTATIONS
SYNOPSIS

DAY 1 Session 1 10.30 am – 11.30 am

**SEEING BEYOND VIOLENCE:
CHILDREN AS PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES**

Barbara Schratz-Hadwich & Rob Walker *University of East Anglia*

DAY 1 Session 2 11.40 am – 12.40 pm

**USING THE ‘LIVED WORLD’ OF THE SCHOOL-COMMUNITY NEXUS
TO EMPOWER CRITICAL SPATIAL LITERACIES**

Kenn Fisher *OECD*

DAY 1 Session 3 2.30 pm – 3.30 pm

**PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION WITH YOUNG COMMUNITY WORKERS:
LEARNING FROM THE ACTIV8 EXPERIENCE**

Sophie Laws & Christopher Creegan *Freelance Consultants*

DAY 1 Session 4 3.50 pm – 4.50 pm

**‘VOICE’ AND VIDEO:
SEEN, HEARD AND LISTENED TO?**

Kaye Haw *University of Nottingham*

DAY 2 Session 5 10.30 pm – 11.30 pm

**LIMITS TO VOICE!
CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON DILEMMAS AND POSSIBILITIES FOR
ENHANCING UNDERSTANDING AND EFFECTIVENESS OF CHILDREN'S
PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL CHANGE PROCESSES**

Barry Percy-Smith *University of West of England / SOLAR*

DAY 1 Session 1
10.30 am – 11.30 am

**Seeing Beyond Violence:
Children as participants in research on human rights issues**

Barbara Schratz-Hadwich & Rob Walker
University of East Anglia

When the UN was proclaiming a study on Violence against Children (<http://www.crin.org/violence/index.asp>), NGOs like SOS Children's Village were asked to participate. The issue of violence against children is daily fact in the worldwide work of SOS Children's Village programmes.

Children admitted to SOS Children's Villages come with an array of violence experiences. The files and records are full of stories about abuse, neglect, poverty, hunger, physical and emotional violence, war stories, trauma, personal tragedies of individuals and families.

But how do children define violence? What are their real life experiences and their social constructions? Is it what they have learnt in their given environment to verbalize through their elders or do they have their own concept of a violence-free world? Is it the same for boys and girls? The same whether growing up Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu or Christian?

As research is an intervention into the personal life of the researched (even participatory research) this intervention for children who have undergone trauma has to be very sensitive - especially if the theme is the own personal experience of trauma. Therefore we did not ask for "violence experience" - we asked for the children's imagination of the absence of violence - the opposite of violence. How would they describe it beyond stereotyped phrases? How would they imagine it? How would they know it when they met it?

The methodology was chosen to support the children's participation and to guarantee to an extent, that the power of adult and expert language would not diminish the children's findings. Not a participatory project from the beginning, as the research question came from the organisation and not the children themselves; it was to open a door to the children's world, to understand their construction of social reality, and to leave the adult world with an image more powerful than verbal interpretation. Especially in SOS Children's Villages, where very often adults come and use their cameras for documenting village life, portraying the children living there, using the caught images for fundraising or marketing projects, the use of cameras and digital equipment for processing the photos gave the children a power unknown before. By handing them the cameras and trusting them with the process the power was reversed and the interpretation process in the line of the research was a joint learning for young and adult researchers.

The study was conducted in Colombia, India, Nicaragua and Thailand in 2003 (<http://www.crin.org/violence/search/closeup.asp?infoID=5520>). The study results are being used for developing an SOS Children's Village child protection policy. The paper/presentation will deal with some of the ethical, methodological and organisational questions of such a research project."

DAY 1 Session 2
11.40 am – 12.40 pm

Using the 'lived world' of the school-community nexus to empower critical spatial literacies

Kenn Fisher
OECD

This presentation does not directly 'go after' student voice per se, but does suggest that using the physicality of the school is the most direct way of engaging with the lived worlds of students.

It struggles with the key question of 'why is the physical learning environment in schools largely ignored by teachers within pedagogical practice?' The cellular classroom has remained seemingly immutable since the Industrial Revolution, with spatiality continuing to maintain a silent and subconscious presence in schooling. Whilst the concept of learning geographies addresses the contextual lived worlds of students it has not adequately tackled the immediacy of their school-based realities.

School buildings clearly reflect power relations as evidenced by elite sandstone schools set in leafy suburbs, in stark contrast to the prison-like carceral egg-crate schools in industrialised mortgage belts often dominated by single parent families. This connection between community and the lives of students at school needs to be understood at a deeper level.

This paper asserts that an active engagement with space and place within schools and the community can demonstrate resistant and emancipatory possibilities for students who are disadvantaged through gender, class, race or socio-economic position in society.

A collaboratively developed spatial theory and praxis related to everyday lives and identities, if linked to an emancipatory, subversive and insurgent form of placemaking, powerfully illustrates a form of social justice in schooling. This psycho-socio spatial praxis suggests that community and school spaces and places should become part of a 'body-space-society' trialectic in schooling as another, if underutilized way, to re-engage students with learning - and with voice.

DAY 1 Session 3
2.30 pm – 3.30 pm

Participatory evaluation with young community workers: learning from the activ8 experience

Sophie Laws & Christopher Creegan
Freelance Consultants

Activ8 has been an interesting and unusual programme to work with as evaluators for a number of reasons. First of all, the involvement of children and young people in the programme itself took the shape of, firstly, 14 young people being employed as trainee project workers by Save the Children, and secondly, many more children and young people taking part in diverse youth and community work initiatives run by the trainees. We were able to work with the trainees quite intensively and over a reasonable period of time, assisting them in evaluating their own work. The brief required us to find a balance between a highly participatory approach, and a strong framework of broad aims set out by Save the Children. A video that we will show at the seminar - 'Involving young people in doing evaluation' - was one of the products of this phase.

The second unusual feature was that when we said that we could not evaluate the very ambitious aims of the programme if we stopped data collection on the day the programme finished, Save the Children agreed that we should return a year later and investigate medium/long term outcomes at that point. We are just completing data collection on this second phase at present. A third feature has been an attempt to link this piece of work with another project (undertaken with Perpetua Kirby and Bridget Pettitt) proposing an approach to more rigorous assessment of the impact of participatory work with children in Save the Children's international programmes.

Save the Children's activ8 programme ran for 18 months in 2002 and 2003. The programme's core aim was to empower children and young people to participate in making a difference to diverse communities across London. The trainees were based in partner agencies in their communities and supported in devising and implementing community projects to benefit children and young people. They were from four 'communities', both geographic and communities of interest – Shoreditch in Hackney, East London; the Vietnamese community in Deptford, South East London; the deaf and disabled communities and the community of homeless young people.

Our current work includes collecting reflections on the efficacy of the participatory approach undertaken during phase one, especially from the trainees themselves. We will also talk about some of the methods the young people devised for their evaluation work, which included use of video and other visual methods; about working with them to set outcome indicators; and about issues of timing in evaluation work.

DAY 1 Session 4
3.50 pm – 4.50 pm

**'Voice' and Video:
Seen, Heard and Listened to?**

Kaye Haw
University of Nottingham

Participative research methods span a broad field of practice and the question of 'voice' is often a key concern whether conducting action research with professionals or social action research within communities. This paper discusses the creation of a process for the articulation of 'voice' within various research paradigms through the use of video and new technologies that combines individual and community empowerment with professional and institutional change. The aim of the process is to create a space for the range of 'voices' concerned with urban regeneration and community involvement in a multi-ethnic inner city context to be heard and acted upon.

The questions of 'voice' and participation are increasingly key concerns of policy makers and practitioners in the UK. Developing inclusive policies and practices that reflect the needs and aspirations of professionals, young people, young people as pupils, and local communities are seen as means of ensuring a fair distribution of opportunities and outcomes for a wide range of interest groups. These are seen as particularly relevant issues within inner city communities marked by wide scale exclusion.

With these issues in mind the paper begins with a discussion of the usefulness of 'voice' as a concept. It then traces the development of the use of video over a variety of projects that set out to articulate a range of 'voices' from the 'therapeutic voice' to the 'critical voice'. Throughout the paper the emphasis of the discussion is on the possibilities and issues of working with 'voice' in this way through an analysis of research relationships rather than the findings of any particular project. The paper then concludes with a discussion linking 'voice' and video through an exploration of possibilities and constraints.

DAY 2 Session 5
10.30 pm – 11.30 pm

Limits to voice!
Critical reflections on dilemmas and possibilities for enhancing understanding and effectiveness of children's participation in local change processes

Barry Percy-Smith
University of West of England / SOLAR

The Growing Up In Cities (GUIC) project has become a model participatory action research project involving children in evaluating and improving their local environments. Since then the involvement of children and young people in local research and development processes across the world has been widespread. Article 12 of the UNCRC states that children should have a say about matters that affect them and have those views taken seriously.

Children are certainly having a say, but evidence suggests that children's participation is often not being taken seriously and frequently does not give rise to meaningful changes in children's lives, with the result that the involvement of children can become tokenistic.

One of the problems seems to be that participation is seen simply as a consultative mechanism, rather than a whole system process of participatory learning and action. This raises questions about issues of accountability and commitment to children and the participation of children in research and change processes.

This presentation will offer some critical insights into some of the wider complexity at play when children participate. It will draw on projects which have involved children in community development processes, as well as thinking from the evolving Children's Participation Learning Network and reflections on the seminar so far, to raise critical issues and questions to support further discussion and innovation of thinking and practice around notions of 'pupil voice'.