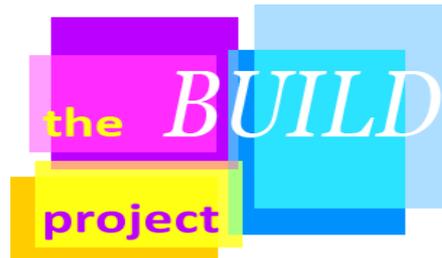


How can we learn from children's participation? Perspectives from two Research Projects

Dr Linda Cooper
Faculty of Health, Social Care & Education

Acknowledgements

- * Project 1: Mallika Kanyal, Anglia Ruskin University
- * Project 2: Dr Kristine Black-Hawkins and Ruth Kershner, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge



Focus for today



- * Why is it important to include children in the research process and understand their perspectives?
- * As students, practitioners and researchers, what can we learn from children's participation?
- * Previous research investigating children's school experiences (Kanyal and Cooper, 2010) and children's sense of inclusion in their classroom setting (Black-Hawkins, Kershner & Cooper, forthcoming)

Why should we encourage children to participate in research involving their schooling experiences?

- * Ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- * Children's legal entitlement to participate in their own learning
- * Recognition of children as social actors in their own right
- * To improve children's school experiences
- * To celebrate best practice in teaching and research

(Kanyal and Cooper, 2012; Gibbs and Cooper, 2014)



Participation – Definition 1

- * ‘Participation is an essential condition of inclusion, which is best understood in the context of a complex series of interactions between individuals, groups and the environment in which children and young people learn, live and grow. Schools are a crucial part of this environment’
- * (EADSNE, 2011: 8)

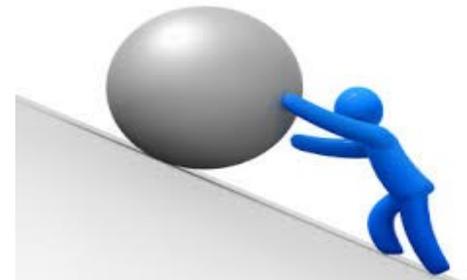
Participation – Definition 2

- * Bringing together, understanding and re-defining the relationship between the concepts of inclusion and achievement
- * (Black-Hawkins, Florian and Rouse, 2007)

Challenges to Participatory Approaches with Children

- * Practitioners not willing to give their authority over to the children
- * Difficulty in attending to a large number of voices
- * Enabling *all* children to participate
- * Placing trust in children's responses
- * Showing tokenism of involvement, rather than true participation

(Hart, 1997; Kanyal and Cooper, 2012)



Project 1



Anglia Ruskin
University

Cambridge & Chelmsford

- * Qualitative research investigating the perspectives of twelve, 5-6 year-old children to find out their views on their actual and ideal school experiences (Kanyal and Cooper; 2010, 2012)
- * Mosaic approach (Clark, McQuail and Moss, 2003) –
- * Children’s drawings, interviews and photographs taken by the children
- * Focusing today only on the English findings

8



Anglia Ruskin University

Actual School Picture

Boy or Girl (circle one) Class 1 Date 029

A. Think of all your school experiences. Now draw a school picture showing the usual things that you do in school. Put yourself, the teacher, and a friend or two in the picture. Make sure everyone is doing something. Please label the people in the drawing and complete the next page.



What did we learn from the 'actual' pictures?

- * Most drawings were of classroom settings and teachers in positions of authority, showing that even 5 and 6 year old children perceive their school life as academically driven



f (4)

Ideal School Picture

Boy or Girl (circle one) Class _____ Date 2 July

A. Think of what might be an ideal school experience for you and draw it. Put yourself, the teacher, and a friend or two in the picture. Make sure everyone is doing something. Please label the people in the drawing and complete the next page.



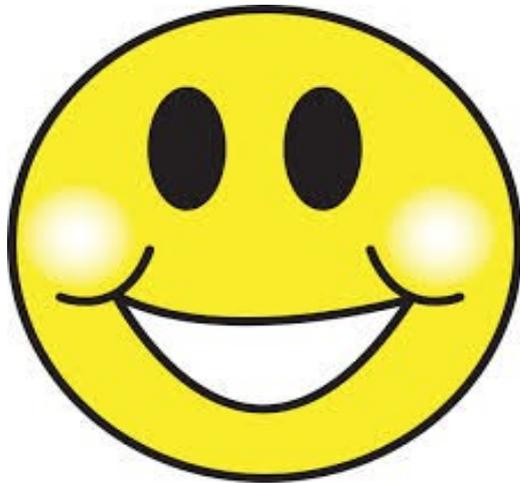
What did we learn from the 'ideal' pictures?

- * Gendered stereotypes could be drawn –
- * Boys involved in physical activities
- * Girls wanting to be with their female friends
- * All 'ideal' pictures were drawings of outdoor images



Interviews

- * Gaining assent and talking with children in pairs



What did we learn?

- * Children's perceptions of why they attend school ranged from:
- * Adult-imposed aims – better futures to
- * Reasons that may be of benefit to themselves – self gratifying, practical, educational



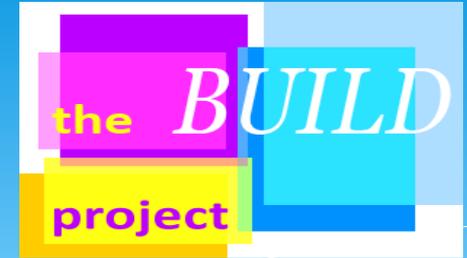
Photographs

- * What did we learn?





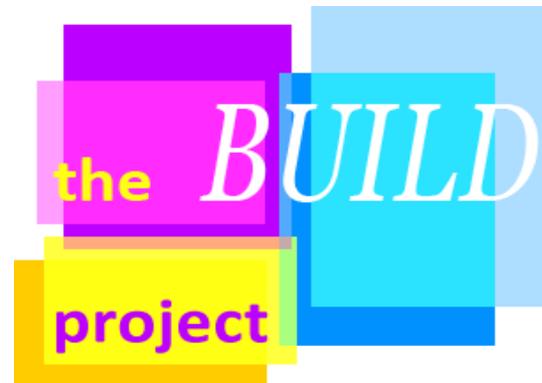
Project 2



- * The BUILD project:
- * Focus on understanding children's and practitioners' experiences of diversity and belonging in the classroom
- * Importance of classroom relationships amongst children, amongst adults and between adults and children (Black-Hawkins, Florian and Rouse, 2007; Kershner, 2009)

BUILD

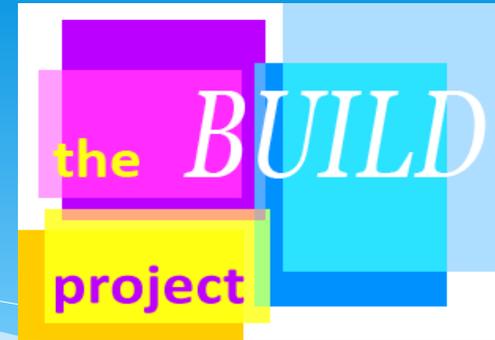
- * **B**elonging
- * **U**nderstanding
- * **I**nclusion
- * **L**earning
- * **D**iversity



Research Objectives

- * To understand the views of early career teachers (ECTs), school leaders and pupils about children's classroom experiences of diversity and belonging
- * To examine the construction of different perspectives through dialogue within and between ECTs, school leaders and pupils in the same school
- * To support ECTs' inclusive pedagogical thinking that attend to matches and mismatches in schools
- * To produce materials for wider use in initial teacher education

The BUILD Project



- * A wider research project investigating early career teachers' understanding of inclusive pedagogy
- * A triangulation approach, also including the voice of the teachers' senior leaders (Head Teachers, Head of Dept etc) and their children – SYSTEMIC CHANGE
- * My focus: qualitative research to understand children's sense of inclusion in their classroom environment

The research project

- * 7 teachers in a primary teacher research network
- * 7 senior leaders
- * 56 children interviewed in small, paired groups, 8 children from each school
- * Teachers attended 4 workshops in the year
- * School leaders in attendance at one workshop

Black-Hawkins' Framework for Inclusion

- * **Participation** and ...
- * **Access:** joining and staying in the class; accessing the curriculum
- * **Collaboration:** children learning in class, teachers learning in class, learning beyond the class
- * **Achievement:** supporting everyone's learning, progress as an everyday expectation
- * **Diversity:** recognising and accepting difference, by children and staff

(Black-Hawkins, 2014)

Interview Questions

Belonging

- * What does it mean to belong to your class?
- * Does belonging matter to your learning?

Diversity

- * How are children similar to each other in your class and how are they different?
- * Does being similar or different matter to your learning?

Their responses (1)

- * Belonging:
- * Safety, comfort, sharing, control, to learn
- * Feeling special, knowing people, friendships

- * Learning together:
- * Someone to help, peer support, growing in confidence

Their responses (2)

- * Diversity
- * Physical attributes (eye/hair colour), being different and being the same (Note: no comments regarding SEN or physical disability)
- * Similarity
- * To be kind, to be good, don't be naughty, friends at school are like family
- * *'Like you're a part of it, life if you weren't there it would be like a puzzle and a piece of a puzzle wasn't there'*

Conclusion



- * By allowing the children to conduct their own research, we can contextualise the differences in children through their norms, values and traditions
- * Children's involvement is vital to shape and enhance quality in the learning environment
- * Practitioners who encourage children to learn through their own perspectives improve the children's experiences and their own teaching practice

References



- * Black-Hawkins, K., Researching inclusive classroom practices: the Framework for Participation. In: Florian, L. (Ed). *The handbook of special education* (2nd ed). London: Sage.
- * Black-Hawkins, K., Florian, L., and Rouse, M., 2007. *Achievement and inclusion in schools*. London: Routledge.
- * Clark, A., McQuail, S., and Moss, P., 2003. *Exploring the field of listening to and consulting with young children*. London: DfES Research Report 445.
- * Cooper, L., 2014. Using interviews to help children talk about their school experience. In: Kanyal, M. (Ed). *Children's rights 0-8: promoting participation in education and care*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- * EADSNE, 2011. *Participation in inclusive education: a framework for developing indicators*. EADSNE: Denmark.
- * Gibbs, J., and Cooper, L., 2014. Challenges to participatory approaches in early years practice. In: Kanyal, M. (Ed). *Children's rights 0-8: promoting participation in education and care*. Abingdon: Routledge.



References (2)

- * Hart, R., 1997. *Children's participation: the theory and practice of involving young citizens in community development and environmental care*. London: Earthscan.
- * Kanyal, M., and Cooper, L., 2012. Young children's perceptions of their classroom environment: perspectives from England and India. In: Papatheodorou, T., and Moyles, J. *Cross-cultural perspectives on early childhood*. London: Sage.
- * Kanyal, M., and Cooper, L., 2010. Young children's perceptions of their school experience: a comparative study between England and India. *Procedia Social and Behavioural Sciences*, Vol 2, No 2, p3605-3613.
- * Kershner, R., 2009. Learning in inclusive classrooms. In: Hick, P., Kershner, R., and Farrell, P. (Eds). *Psychology for inclusive education: new directions in theory and practice*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- * United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989. Available at: www.unicef.org.uk (Accessed: 17.04.14)