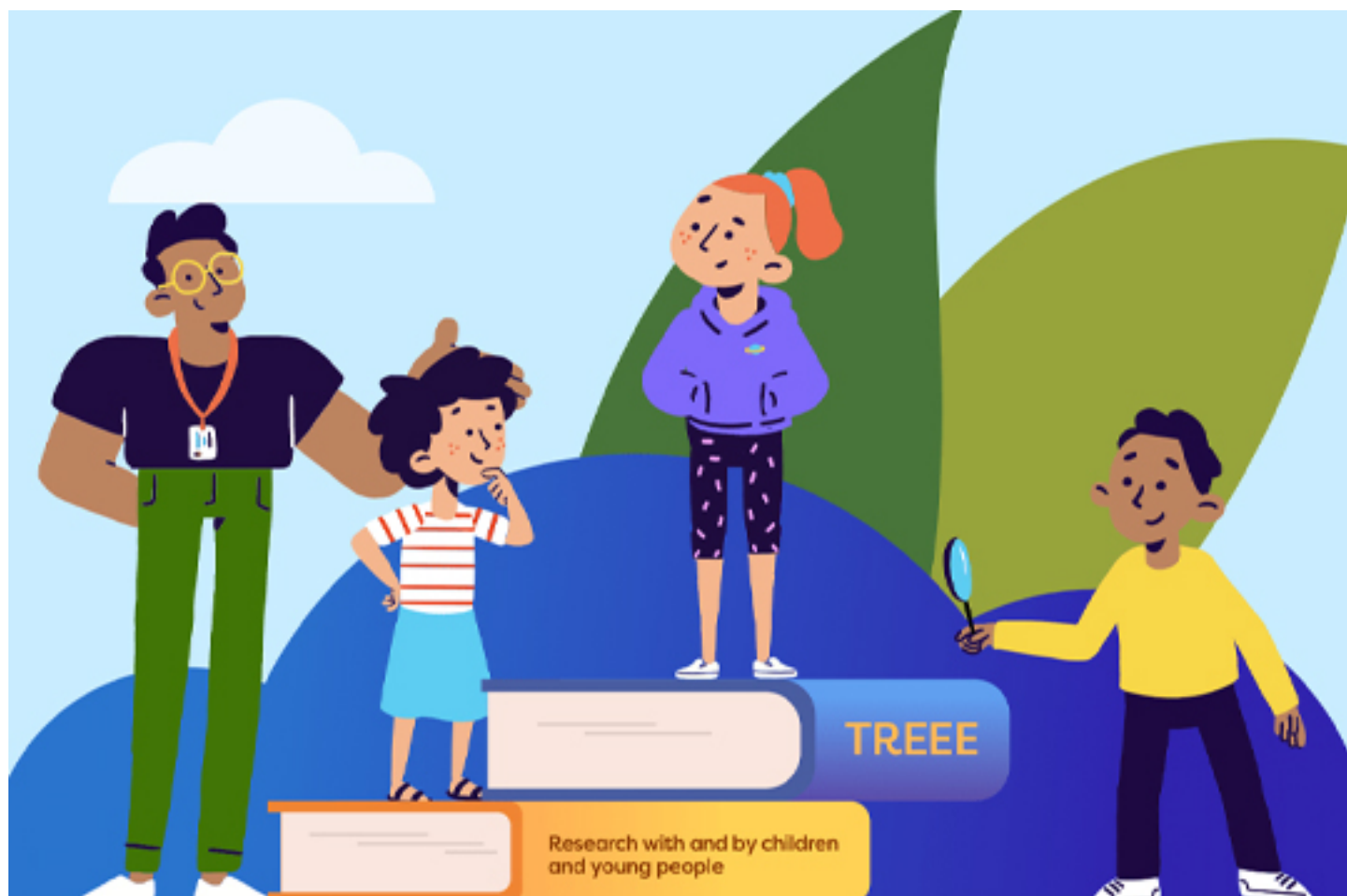


Understanding research with children and young people



This item contains selected online content. It is for use alongside, not as a replacement for the module website, which is the primary study format and contains activities and resources that cannot be replicated in the printed versions.

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This free course is an adapted extract from the Open University course E809 *Frameworks for critical practice with children and young people* <http://www.open.ac.uk/postgraduate/modules/e809>.

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<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/conducting-research-children/content-section-overview>

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Session 1: Why do it?

Introduction

The first Session will look at this essential element, why it is important to include children and young people in research about their lives. This underpins this course and the OU Our Voices project overall.



By the end of this session, you should be able to:

- give some reasons why it is important for children and young people to be involved in research that affects their own lives
- summarise key Articles of the UNCRC which relate specifically to children and young people's rights with regard to research that affects their lives
- identify some challenges that may be encountered when researching with children and young people.

First of all, have a look at this short introductory video.

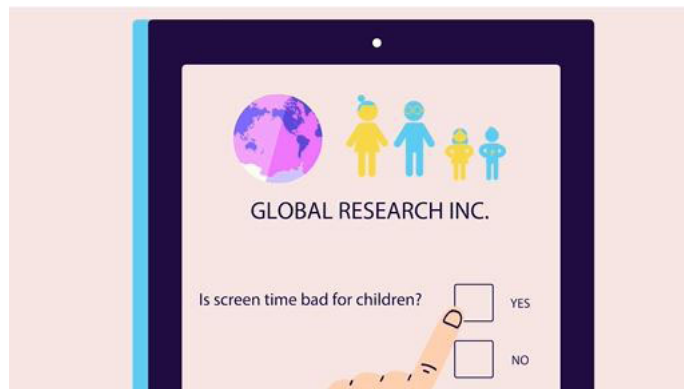
Activity 1

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

As you watch Video 1, consider what key points are presented in the video. What is the value of engaging with children and young people in research about their lives? Make notes as you watch, then click on the 'key points' below to compare your answers.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 1](#)



Discussion

Key points:

- Research questions are frequently aimed at, and answered by, adults.
- Children and young people have the right to express themselves.
- Children and young people are often more articulate than adults think they are going to be.
- They see things adults do not, they are experts in their own lives.
- Adults should be partners with the children and young people; this will lead to better research.

The Open University would really appreciate a few minutes of your time to tell us about yourself and your expectations for the course before you begin, in our optional [start-of-course survey](#). Participation will be completely confidential and we will not pass on your details to others.

1 Children and young people as researchers

While studying this course, you will think about ways to give all children and young people – aged 5-23, and regardless of gender, ethnicity or ability – a space to reflect on and raise their own voices around how they can be involved, as experts in their own right, in a research project. Consulting with them in this way allows them to be core and active participants to that research and ensures that their voices are heard.

Activity 2

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

In this video, you will see young researchers from Lincroft School talking about the research projects they participated in, which were based in their local communities. You might like to make notes as you watch, and you can pause the video as many times as you wish. Once you have finished viewing, answer the questions that follow. Write your answers in the box on the screen, then click on 'reveal discussion' to see if that mirrors your own thoughts, or offers you further ideas.

View at: [youtube:Wx4CbfpzFGA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wx4CbfpzFGA)

Video 2

What did the children gain from carrying out the research?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Confidence, how to compose a questionnaire, understanding of ethical issues, communication skills (as well as answers to their own research questions).

What new insights, if any, have you gained from the range of children's perspectives and experiences expressed in the video?

Provide your answer...

2 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Not only is it likely that better research will result, involving children and young people in research affecting their lives is actually mandated by an even more fundamental factor: their international rights. These rights were articulated in 1989, in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which states that children and young people have the right to be consulted, to be heard and to participate meaningfully in matters affecting their lives. They also have the right to have their best interests as a primary consideration.

Box 1: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the UNCRC).

The UNCRC is the most complete statement of children's rights ever produced and is the most widely-ratified international human rights treaty in history – it's even been accepted by non-state entities, such as the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), a rebel movement in South Sudan. All UN member states except for the United States have ratified the Convention. The Convention came into force in the UK in 1992; in the UK, it is accepted that every child has rights, whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities or any other status.

The Convention must be seen as a whole: all the rights are linked and no one right is more important than another. The right to relax and play (Article 31), for example, and the right to freedom of expression (Article 13) have equal importance as the right to be safe from violence (Article 19) and the right to education (Article 28).

You can read the full Convention, and a summary, if you click [here](#).

If you are thinking about planning a research project with and by children or young people, three of the articles stand out as particularly relevant in this context:

- **Article 3** In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
- **Article 12** Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views, the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
- **Article 13** The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice

Activity 3

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

What is the key element, in your opinion, that stands out, in terms of children and young people expressing their views, in these three Articles?

Click on the option that you think is the key element, and see how other learners voted.

Interactive content is not available in this format.

Interactive content is not available in this format.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You may have noted:

- best interests
- freely
- due weight
- freedom of expression
- child's choice
- ideas of all kinds

3 The UNICEF U-report

The United Nations Children's Fund, (UNICEF), is a United Nations agency responsible for providing humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide. The UNCRC, that you have just been learning about, is at the basis of all of UNICEF's work. You can see how UNICEF promotes and supports the key tenets of the UNCRC in a practical way as you work through this next activity.

You are now going to look at a case-study from UNICEF Uganda, which offers an example of children being consulted so that they can participate meaningfully in matters affecting their lives. Click on the link [here](#) to find out as much as you can about the project, then try the activities that follow. Remember to open the link in a new tab or window, so you can easily refer back to the course.

Activity 4

Allow approximately 25 minutes.

1. Complete the sentences by dragging the appropriate ending to match with the beginnings.

The objectives of the U-Report were:

of young people in developing countries.

for the gathering of information from various sources.

through SMS text messaging.

based on the information gained.

to decision-makers in positions of power.

Match each of the items above to an item below.

To amplify the voices and views

To provide a central platform

To disseminate information gained

To compile reports

To send the reports

2. This project was successful for a variety of reasons, some of which you will see listed below.

Which was the most important reason out of this list, do you think? Remember there is not necessarily a right or wrong answer here.

Interactive content is not available in this format.

4 Listening to the very young: the Mosaic approach.

So far in this session, you have heard the views of secondary-aged school children who conducted research themselves, and you have just been considering the fundamental rights of all children to be heard and to participate. In this section, you are going to look at very young children whose views can easily be overlooked when they are deemed not to have anything of value to contribute.

The Mosaic approach, developed by Alison Clark and Peter Moss for use with young children in early years settings, brings together a wide range of methods and tools, which can be used in combination to gain an understanding of children's views and experiences of their environments. It recognises that some tools will be more suitable to use with individual children than others but assumes that all children's views and experiences are valuable. Examples of tools used within this approach include observation, interviews and child-led tours of their environment. Taking pictures and creating maps often involve children in a lot of talking and these activities are as much about a 'vehicle for listening' as they are about an end result. Children are in charge of the tours and are also in charge of reviewing the images they capture, deciding which ones to display and share with others. The advantages of this approach include building children's skills and confidence, as well as giving adults insight into children's perspectives, while the challenges include interpreting and representing the varied data gathered.



In the next video you are going to see a Headteacher talking about her own experience of research with very young children through a project she has called the Listening Project. Teachers in this project took a novel approach to 'tuning in' really effectively to nursery school children so that what they had to say was carefully listened to and heard.

The project was based at the Robert Owen Centre at the Rachel McMillan nursery school in London, where a whole Inset (staff training) day introduced the idea of children's participation and looked at the work of Alison Clark and Peter Moss. This video clip highlights the need to develop specific skills to listen to very young children. The Rachel McMillan nursery went on to build on the principles of the project and to develop the importance of not just listening to children but of attuning to them. You will look further at the concept of 'attuning' in Session 2.

Activity 5

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

For now, look at this short extract, but before you watch the clip, take a few minutes to consider how we listen to each other. The Headteacher refers to 'the many ways that

people can communicate that aren't necessarily speaking;' what do you think she means by this? Note down your thoughts now, then watch the video and try the activities which follow it.

Provide your answer...

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 3](#)



How is listening described?

[Discussion](#)

Rachel Hogarth-Smith refers to 'everything you notice about another person,' rather than just directly hearing what they're saying.

What effect did this project have on the 'working atmosphere' in the school?

Provide your answer...

[Discussion](#)

The staff reflected on their own practice, how they responded to what they saw the children doing. Their own action plans focussed on the project.

Can you think of any barriers to listening to children and young people, and very young children in particular?

Provide your answer...

5 Getting the adults involved

In the 'Listening Project' you have just been looking at, the focus was on finding ways for adults to listen effectively to children, in this case very young children. Creating good conditions for children and young people to take part in research involves creating an environment where people of all ages recognise their interdependence and diversity, and feel comfortable expressing their views alongside each other. Empowering children and young people as participants in research has the potential to redress some of the balance in terms of the way in which adults dominate the world of research. It means that children and young people have an opportunity to present their own understandings and interpretations in ways that they choose, rather than adults directing their participation in the research and interpreting ideas on their behalf.

It is important that adults think carefully about their own influence and how it impacts on the research if the research is to reflect children and young people's perspectives.

In the final sections of this Session, you are going to think about adults' involvement in research with children and young people. You may start to consider your own research project, what that might be and what role you might play in it, while keeping in mind the rights of the children and young people to be fully involved.

In this next clip, you are going to hear an interview in which a researcher, Alison, talks about a research project she carried out. There are some activities to follow, which you may like to look at first, so you can keep the questions in mind as you listen.

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Audio 1](#)

Activity 6

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

What was the purpose of Alison's research?

Provide your answer...

How and why did she involve children and young people?

Provide your answer...

What was the result of her research?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

She wanted to examine the role of social media in schools and professional practice.

She realised that the voices of the children and young people were actually more important and that they should be 'brought to the table' along with the voices of the teachers and professionals.

They created a social media charter.

This research involved the voices of the children and young people but it had been initiated by an adult.

What do you think were the challenges Alison faced in conducting this research?

If you were carrying out a similar project, how would you ensure that the children and young people were active participants?

Provide your answer...

6 Undertaking research with children and young people.

In the recording you just heard, Alison referred to 'ethicality'; you will be looking in more depth at the ethical aspect of research later in this course. For now, you are going to think about issues that may arise for you, as a researcher, and how your own feelings and experiences may impact on your research. Throughout this Session you have been considering the importance of children's and young people's participation in research that affects their lives. Whether you are an adult or a young person conducting the research, you need to bear in mind that children and young people are not a homogeneous group; they bring their diverse views and backgrounds to research, and the same will be true for the adults working alongside them.

Sometimes, some groups of children and young people will have more in common with some adults with whom they share particular experiences than they will with their peers. For example, some children, young people and adults will all have experiences of being diabetic or growing up in poverty. At the same time, experiences of children and young people in these situations will, potentially, differ from those of adults, and for researchers these differences are worth investigating. You might like to look at the [Our Voices website here](#), for more detail on this aspect of sharing experiences; there will be links to this website throughout this course and in particular in Session 4.

Activity 7

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

In this last recording for this Session, you will hear three adult researchers talking about the personal and emotional impact their research had. Before you start to listen, look at the questions below, and keep those in mind as you listen. Record your answers in the box as you listen to the recording, then click on 'reveal discussion' to see a summary of the key points raised.

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Audio 2](#)

As an adult, can you think of any issues raised in this audio that you have had to face personally in your work with children and young people, or in your daily life?

Provide your answer...

As a young person, are there any issues raised by these researchers that you have had to face when working with an adult, or in your daily life?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

It can be difficult not to get emotionally involved in the lives of the people you are researching with.

People may share personal information. It's important to have a 'safe space' for people to talk.

Some issues raised during a research project may be contentious or cause conflict.

Adults may find their personal experiences impact on the way they research the experiences of children and young people.

7 Summary of Session 1

Throughout this Session, you have been making notes and completing various activities. Anything you have written into the online boxes will be saved, so you can return to these at any time. You may prefer to keep a separate notebook, either digital or paper; take some time, now, to check that all your notes are up-to-date and organised, and to decide which is your preferred way of note-taking. Have another look back at any sections that you would like to re-visit or to work further on.

Finally, reflect on your own background and motivation to research, and put your ideas in the boxes below:

Activity 8

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

Why is it important to include Children and Young People in research about their lives?

Provide your answer...

What age group will you be conducting research with?

Before you work through Session 2, make a note of any particular challenges and opportunities you think you will encounter in your chosen age-group.

Provide your answer...

Now get started with [Session 2](#).

Session 2: What is research with children and young people?

Introduction

So far in your learning you have considered why research with and by children and young people is important. You have considered the importance, and value, of involving them in research that concerns them, their lives and issues directly affecting them. In this Session you will be looking at what it means to carry out research with children and young people. You will reflect on your own interests in this type of research and consider some of the different ways to design child- and young person-focused research. You will be thinking of the challenges and opportunities that may arise when undertaking research with and by children and young people. What do you need to consider as you start to plan your research?

By the end of this session, you should be able to:

- identify, broadly speaking, a way to design a research project that is appropriate to the age-group with which you plan to work
- describe some of the potential challenges you may face in your planned research
- list 2 or 3 steps you could take to overcome any challenges.

Watch this short video which offers some key tips for anyone who may be planning research with children and young people. As you watch, make notes, and consider what you need to take into account. What should successful research involve?

Video content is not available in this format.



Activity 1

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

Here are some sentences that summarise the video you have just been watching, but they have been split up. Can you match the phrases so that they make complete sentences?

is a partnership between adults and children or young people.

that are appropriate to the age-range.

because their methods are more likely to be meaningful.

carry out their own research.

the children's or young people's perspective is reflected more than the adults'.

Match each of the items above to an item below.

Successful research

Select methods

Involve the children and young people in the design

Let the children and young people

Take care that

Later in this Session, you will learn of some of the benefits children and young people can gain from projects they have undertaken themselves, and what research means to them personally. But, as you saw in the video, careful planning is essential, so first you will be considering what you need to do in order to get the most out of your project. You may be presented with particular challenges and opportunities, and you may need to develop specific skills.

In Session 1 you learned of the right for children and young people's voices to be heard. Their opinions, and what they have to say, need to be understood. Therefore, they need to be listened to. This may sound simple, but in the next section you will be investigating how to listen effectively, so that voices are fully heard.

1 How do we listen?

We all think we listen, but if we are to listen effectively to children and young people, we may need to adapt or hone our skills in particular ways.



In Session 1, you watched the video clip of the Headteacher talking about the Listening Project at her nursery school. The teachers involved said that as a result of the project they found they had an even deeper understanding of how to listen than they had before. They talked not only of listening, but of 'attuning' to the children. What does this mean? How can we adapt our listening skills to maximise our understanding of what is being conveyed?

In this section of the film, you will see the Headteacher, a school governor and teachers talking about their experiences with the Listening Project. As you watch, consider the challenges they faced and how they 'attuned' to the voices of the children. Then try the activities that follow which will show you that the listening skills described here are not restricted to communicating with very young children; no matter the age of the child or young person, 'attuning' is an essential skill.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 1](#)



Activity 2

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

Here is a summary of what you have just been watching about the Listening Project and 'attunement.' Some of the words have been missed out: can you select the missing word, and drag it to the appropriate space?

Interactive content is not available in this format.

Discussion

The concept of 'attunement' developed while the teachers were involved in the Listening Project. It means more than just listening; it means being aware of **[body language]**, and stepping back rather than taking a lead. It's a way of showing **[empathy]** for the child you are talking to, and giving them the **[opportunity]** to express themselves. You **[tune in]** to their interests and passions and give them an **[environment]** that makes them feel comfortable. Attunement is a **[vital]** element in building a relationship and it extends beyond talking with young children; you can **[practise]** the same **[empathetic]** approach with the parents and carers too.

The research project you are planning may not involve such young children, but you can still be a skilful listener. What are the key elements of 'attuning' that you can employ with children or young people of any age?

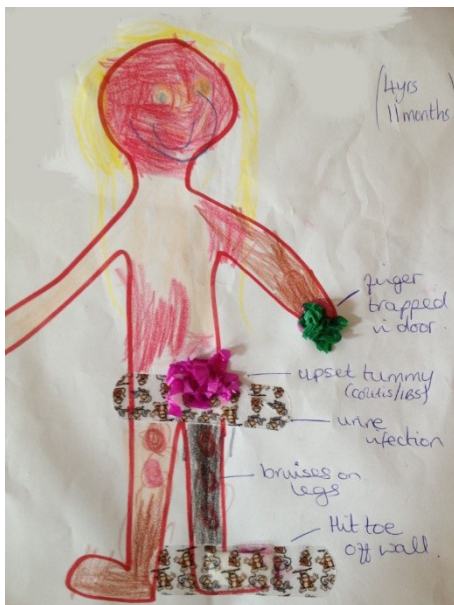
Provide your answer...

Discussion

watch body language; empathise; get onto their wavelength; support them in a way that makes sense to them; use language they understand; open body language; look beyond the confident ones.

2 Understanding children's views

One researcher who has specialised in carrying out research with very young children is Alison Clark. Together with Peter Moss, she developed the 'Mosaic approach.' The principles of this approach are to use a variety of methods in order to build up an understanding of young children's views, not just to rely solely on questionnaires and interviews. As you remember from the video you watched at the start of this Session, it is essential to find methods appropriate to the age-range of the children and young people with whom you are carrying out your research. So, in the case of very young children, this could include a range of visual methods; photographs and drawings, for example, are a good way to encourage such young children to participate in discussions about things that affect their lives. Here, you can see how a simple outline picture was used for a young child to share their experience of pain.



From Carter et al: Engaging with children in designing pain research: how to do it and is it worth the effort?

There are so many different media that researchers can use nowadays; play, art, pictures, photos: the key is to select the method that is appropriate. You may not be planning to carry out research with such young children. However, this approach is so focussed on listening to and attuning with the children, that when used with any age-range it can lead to successful results. Remember that the children and young people are experts in their own lives. Therefore, it is essential to find the best way of giving them the opportunity to express that expertise.

Click on the link below to find a document which gives an example of how the Mosaic approach was applied for one project. There is an activity to follow, so as you read, consider the key elements of the Mosaic approach, and how this approach is not limited to carrying out research with young children. Remember to open the link in a new tab or window so you can refer back to the activity when reading.

[What is the Mosaic approach?](#)

Activity 3

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

In these summary statements, which are true and which are false? Click on the statements which are true:

- ☐ The Mosaic approach means just watching the children carefully and then interviewing them.
- ☐ The Mosaic approach employs a variety of different methods, including photos and film.
- ☐ The first study using this approach showed that the children's eating facilities were important to them.
- ☐ The Mosaic approach showed that professional assumptions were sometimes wrong.
- ☐ Architects had thought that only primary colours were appropriate for a nursery.

3 Communicating children's and young people's views

As you carry out your research project, you may find you are listening to a range of voices from a range of backgrounds and age-groups. In this next recording, you will hear Alison Clark, Senior Lecturer in Childhood Studies at The Open University, talking about one of her participatory research projects with the under-fives, focusing on communicating children's views in her work.

Activity 4

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

As you listen, note what challenges she encountered, and put your thoughts in the boxes below.

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Audio 1](#)

What challenges did Alison face? How do you think she could deal with these while doing her research?

Provide your answer...

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Audio 2](#)

What similarities did she find between how architects work and how children express themselves?

Provide your answer...

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Audio 3](#)

What methods did Alison use to make sure that the practitioners' views could be fully expressed and understood?

Provide your answer...

Having looked at young children, we need to understand that as they grow and develop, our approach to working with them needs to adapt and change in order to respect what they have to offer. Their ability to make choices becomes more complex as does their ability to engage with and determine different aspects of a research project. Look, now, at another researcher, Meera, who is working in a school context with older children. In this short video, you will see her talking about how she sought to hear, understand, and value the views of her students.

Activity 5

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

Bearing in mind what you have been considering in terms of effective listening skills, and the importance of the young people being able to participate fully, watch the video and then try the activity that follows.

Video content is not available in this format.



These five statements summarise the key points Meera was making about how she set up her project, but some of the words are missing. Can you write in the missing word?

space

agreement

respect

voice

show

Match each of the items above to an item below.

Pupils were given _____ to express their views.

There were boundaries, but these were set by _____ with the class.

A vital element was _____ for one another.

Every _____ was valued.

Body language was important; _____ that you are listening.

Discussion

- Pupils were given **space** to express their views.
- There were boundaries, but these were set by **agreement** with the class.

- A vital element was **respect** for one another.
- Body language was important; **show** that you are listening.
- Every **voice** was valued.

Rather like Alison, whose work you have been learning about, Meera found she developed some new skills, new approaches as she was working with her pupils. Think about the answers you have just given, and the concept of 'attunement' and effective listening.

In her classroom, what simple things do you think Meera might have done to ensure that her pupils were able to participate fully and be listened to? Note down one or two ideas first, then watch the video to see what she has to say. See if you can identify at least three simple steps she takes, and write them in the box.

Video content is not available in this format.



What does Meera do to ensure the pupils' voices are heard?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Discussion

She moves around the classroom. This breaks the 'physical barrier' she perceives between teacher and pupil.

She sits with the pupils, she crouches down.

She is attentive to what they say, establishes eye contact. She encourages other pupils to do the same.

She sees her role as mediator or facilitator in order to value the pupils' contributions.

In this section, you have learned that researching with children and young people means listening effectively. To ensure full participation, all voices must be heard, so it is important to find the most appropriate way for children and young people to communicate.

In the next section you will look a little closer at what motivates children and young people to participate in research, and what research means to them.

4 What is child-led research?

Research led by children and young people is the process of enquiry into an issue of relevance to their lives. Doing social research means finding out about people and society in order to solve problems, or to design services or products that cater for various needs of people.

Activity 6

Allow approximately 40 minutes.

There are many reasons that children and young people might decide to have a go at doing their own social research; here are three:

1: Wanting to change something.



Discussion

It could be, for example, that children want more say about local policy and decide to do some research which involves asking their peers for their opinions in order to create a strong argument that they can then take to policy-makers. Remember that the UNCRC, which you studied in Session 1, acknowledges the right for children and young people to be heard and to participate in society. Adults have an adult perspective; children and young people are experts on their own lives, so it is important that they are supported to make their own opinions and viewpoints heard.

2: Wanting to find out more about a topic.



Discussion

Few people would deny that curiosity and inquisitiveness are good characteristics to encourage in children and young people of all ages. Asking questions and finding out

new things are important for learning and for understanding the world. Finding out what other children in your school think about maths lessons, or what other young people understand about money, for example, can be fascinating.

3: Wanting to learn what it is like to do social research.



Discussion

Most children and young people have experience of project work at school (i.e. they find out about things that are already known) but few of them will have had an opportunity to find out what it is like to be a social researcher. Doing social research means finding out about people and society in order to solve problems, or to design services or products that cater for various needs of people. The experience of doing social research and being a social researcher can be enlightening and can help children and young people to understand what research is and what researchers do. The insights they gain might help them make career decisions, or they might be able to apply what they learn to their school lessons, for example.

In the next video you are going to see how some children at a special school carried out their own research. As you watch the video make notes on the following: What were the reasons for their research? Did they want to change something, or find out more about something? Then, once you have watched the video, try the activity that follows.

Video content is not available in this format.



Drag the words and phrases into the appropriate box:

The seating, the meals, the sports facilities.

The possibility of inter-school sports competitions.

Communication skills and confidence

Match each of the items above to an item below.

What they wanted to change.

What they wanted to find out about.

What they gained from doing their research.

Discussion

As you watched the video, you will have noticed that the adults interviewed commented that the issues raised by the pupils were not issues they had considered themselves. Yet the benefits of the research are clear: by improving the school meals the young people are likely to eat better; by changing the chairs to more comfortable ones their concentration is likely to improve; by developing better social skills they are likely to communicate with each other and with the teachers better. Each of these aspects has the potential to enrich these young people's school experience, but as was remarked in the video, the focus came from them. The issues were not identified by teachers, simply because the teachers do not have the same perspective. This highlights the importance of children and young peoples' participation, as experts in their own lives, in research that affects their lives.

The next example is a powerpoint presentation by Shannon Davidson who is 10 years old. You will see how she went about conducting her research, and her findings are presented in some detail.

Look through her presentation and consider her motivations for doing her research. Did she want to change something? Did she want to find out more? Did she want to solve a problem?

Open the link below in a new tab or browser so you can refer to the document while considering the questions below.

[What children think about having a thyroid disorder: a small scale study. By Shannon Davidson](#)

What was Shannon's motivation for carrying out her research?

Provide your answer...

What did she find out?

Provide your answer...

What insights have you gained from reading Shannon's research project?

Provide your answer...

Now think about children or young people you know who would benefit from carrying out a project similar to Shannon's. How would you answer the next two questions? (You will be looking at these aspects of planning and preparing in more detail in Session 3).

What support could you offer them?

Provide your answer...

Who could you approach for help and guidance?

Provide your answer...

5 From research to action: not always easy

The examples you have seen in this session have shown children and young people expressing a need for change, for things to be done differently, for more information. But what happens when adults impose their views and restrictions on how children's contributions are shared? It is not always easy to implement change; challenges or obstacles imposed by adults or authorities may intervene.

Kanwal Mand offers an interesting case-study which highlights this issue: read the brief summary of her study in the box below, then answer the questions which follow.

Box 1: Mand's research

Mand (2012) reports on a participatory arts-based project conducted with 9- and 10-year-old children of Bangladeshi origin attending two London schools. Part of a wider research study which sought to discover how children from South Asian families experience mobility across places, and, importantly, to develop innovative methods in migration research, the project involved the children in producing sketches of images they related to home and, separately, to being away. These were then used as raw material for the production of graffiti boards by a local 'spiritual' artist whose background was similar to those of the children. Although this participatory approach was intended by Mand to include children's voices within the research, she reports her unhappiness when discovering that the children would take a passive role in the production of the graffiti. Due in part to the artist's expressed need for consistency across the different panels this was also, and more significantly, because the artist ruled out some of the images the children had produced. These were, he considered, controversial.

Mand describes how this selection process, carried out by an artist whom she had chosen because of his apparent understanding of the project, 'stifled' some of the children's voices and 'felt like the antithesis of participatory practices': children's perspectives were 'moulded to fit a particular version of Islam based on an "adult" perspective'. As part of the planned research output, the graffiti boards, along with banners produced using the children's pictures, were displayed by a well-known museum. These, however, were hung according to strict display rules which stipulated that they were to be placed out of children's reach. Their detail was thus rendered difficult to decipher. Other images were rejected by the museum as lacking visual impact. Moreover, it was a requirement of the museum that the text accompanying the exhibition be written by the researcher following strict museum-imposed criteria, a process, Mand states, of 're-inserting the authority of the researcher'. In spite of Mand's participatory approach, children's voices were subdued 'at the point of representation in the public space of the museum'.

Activity 7

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

How were the children's perspectives captured?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

They produced sketches of 'home' and 'away.'

How were the children's perspectives represented through the research project?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

They were to be used as raw material for a 'graffiti board' produced by a spiritual artist.

In what ways did the artist's representation 'stifle' the children's voices?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

He selected the images and rejected some because he said they were controversial. He imposed his need for consistency across the different panels.

What other constraints were imposed on this project, and by whom?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The museum: the pictures were hung inappropriately; the accompanying texts were written by the researcher according to strict museum guidelines.

How else do you think this study might have been approached, so that the researcher's intention of having the children's voices heard was met? Can you think of two or three things that you would do, if you were the researcher here?

Discussion

This example shows how as a researcher, you cannot assume that everyone you work with has the same understanding of children's and young people's 'participation.' Just as Alison Clark found a way to communicate with the architects in her project, in this case it would be necessary to work with the adults involved, so that the end result reflected the children's views, that their voices were heard clearly and were not secondary to those set out by the artist and museum. You would need to find a way to communicate clearly the aims and purposes of your project, and to tackle any obstacles presented in a practical way. You might even find that you need to find a different venue for presenting the project, if you encounter too much intransigence.

6 Attuning in practice: establishing a successful research platform

In this last section you will look at a case-study which was successful in ensuring that everything was set up as well as possible for the voices of the children and young people to be heard. Throughout this Session you have seen that research with and by children and young people involves their full participation but there are also many other participants and issues to be taken into consideration. Communication is key; the WeCan2 project shows one way of ensuring that the adults were attuned to the young people. Click on the link below to read the article, then try the activities which follow. Remember to open the link in a new tab or window so you can refer back to the activity.

Case study: WeCan2

The WeCan2 project involved working with young with learning difficulties, yet the findings are applicable in any situation. As you work through this next activity, consider how important all of the advice is to anyone who wishes to work with others.

Activity 8

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

Imagine you are giving advice to a friend or colleague who wishes to have a meeting, or conduct some research with a child or young person, or a group of children or young people. Using the six bullet-points from the summary of the WeCan2 project, write 6 sentences that advise them what is the best way of going about this.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You should have come up with something like this:

Speak more slowly.

Send minutes in advance of the meeting.

Check the size of print and the quality of pictures.

Don't use complex language or unnecessarily long words.

Schedule your meeting at a time when people are alert and awake.

Check access to all venues selected for meetings.

7 Summary of Session 2

You have now come to the end of Session 2, which has focussed on examples of children and young people participating in research, and the potential difference their involvement can make. In the next Session, you will be looking at some essential considerations which underpin any research conducted with and by children and young people. Before you move on, take some time to check that your notes are in order, and go back over any activities you have done in this Session that, you feel, would merit further work or another look.

Finally, think about your own situation. The examples and case-studies you have looked at in this Session have identified key issues relevant to most research projects, regardless of the age of the children, young people, adults and authorities you will be working with. What obstacles will you face, personally, and how will you need to consider these obstacles as you plan your research? Put your thoughts in the box below:

Activity 9

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

What obstacles or challenges may I face when undertaking research with or by children?

Provide your answer...

Whose support or buy-in do I need to be able to overcome any potential obstacles?

Provide your answer...

How will I go about getting that support?

Provide your answer...

You are now halfway through the course. The Open University would really appreciate your feedback and suggestions for future improvement in our optional [end-of-course survey](#), which you will also have an opportunity to complete at the end of Session 4. Participation will be completely confidential and we will not pass on your details to others.

Now get started with [Session 3](#).

Session 3: The TRREEE principles

Introduction

So far, you have gained insight into the fundamental rights of children and young people contained in the UNCRC, and considered the importance of involving them in research that concerns them or affects their lives. In this Session you will be provided with a framework which can underpin all research with and by children, to help you start to formulate your own research project ideas and consider how you will go about carrying them out.

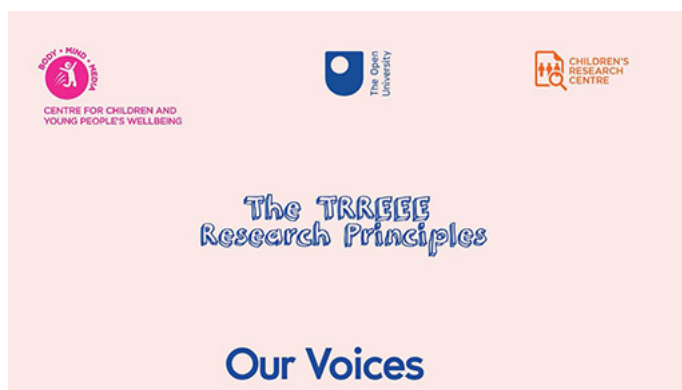
By the end of this session, you should be able to:

- explain what is meant by the TRREEE principles underpinning research with children and young people
- list three practical things you would do in preparation for starting your project
- demonstrate how you have understood ethical considerations in the practical preparations you have in mind.

Watch this short video which illustrates how this framework can be summarised in six key principles, the 'TRREEE' principles. Make notes as you watch, if you need to, then try the activity which follows.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1



Activity 1

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

In the list below, which were the words summarised as the TRREEE principles? Tick the ones that you met as you watched the video:

- ☐ Trust
- ☐ Theory
- ☐ Reliability
- ☐ Respect
- ☐ Rights
- ☐ Research
- ☐ Responsibility
- ☐ Ethics
- ☐ Expertise
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Experience

Answer

**Answers to Activity 1:
words summarised as
the TRREEE
principles.**

Correct	Incorrect
Trust	Theory
Respect	Reliability
Rights	Research
Ethics	Responsibility
Expertise	Education
Experience	

Later in this session you will see some specific examples of research with and by children and young people, and you will see how the TRREEE principles run through those research examples. Before you do that, think about what it will be like to carry out your own research. How will you get started? In the box below, see if you can note the first three steps you will need to take to get your project started.

Activity 2

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

1. What age group of children/young people will you be working with?

Provide your answer...

2. Have you identified the focus of your enquiry?

Provide your answer...

3. Whose help or support will you need to seek? Will you need to gain permission?

Provide your answer...

1 Framing my own research

Once you have an idea of what it is you want to find out about, and with whom, what happens next? Bearing in mind the principles you have just watched in the video, here are some key issues for you to consider as you start to plan.

First: What is the purpose of my research?

- What is my research for?
- Will it add to what is already known?
- What contributions will be made by the children or young people?
- What might be the potential costs and benefits to them?

Activity 3

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

What do you think are the 'costs' and 'benefits' referred to above? Write your thoughts in the box below, then click on the discussion to see how the comments support your answers.

What are the potential costs to the children or young people?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Time. Your project may have an impact on their time at school, or take them away from time with friends and family.

Intrusion of privacy. Bear in mind that you may be asking questions that can touch very personal issues.

Fear of possible repercussions. A child or young person may feel that their participation in your project could lead to them being judged or criticised.

What are the potential benefits to the children or young people?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Satisfaction. The project may result in a change which affects their lives in a positive way. Children and young people will gain satisfaction from being involved in decision-making, or in achieving an end result.

Learning new skills or development of knowledge. Skills gained from working on a project can be transferrable to their everyday life.

Then: Be ethical. Pay careful attention to the impact your research may have on the children or young people, and their environment. Consider the potential to cause distress

or disappointment, if the project is unsuccessful, for example, or the expectations of the children or young people are not met.

This session focuses on the TRREEE principles which you saw outlined in the video. The first **E** stands for **E**thics, but in planning your project you need to approach each of the TRREEE principles from an ethical point of view. You **T**rust the children and young people and **R**espect their **R**ight to participate, but consider that they might share a confidence with you which raises safeguarding concerns. Who will you report this to? You recognise them all as **E**xperts in their own lives, so how will you select the children and young people you will work with? Are the findings intended to be representative or typical of a certain group?

If so, have the children in the study been carefully selected? And importantly, can they refuse or withdraw from participating at any stage? And finally, your project has the potential to be a rewarding **E**xperience all round, for all participants, young and adult. So you need to plan how to feedback and disseminate your findings in a way that is appropriate to all.

With this in mind, as well as the responses you gave to Activity 3 on costs and benefits, read through the key questions in the box below and give your own answers in note form in the activity which follows.

Box 1

How will you select the children or young people?

How will you ensure inclusivity?

How will you obtain consent, where necessary?

How will you manage issues of privacy or anonymity?

How will you store confidential data?

Have you considered the possible impact of your research on the children or young people?

How will the children or young people receive feedback from the research?

Activity 4

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

How will you deal with the following:

1. Selecting the children or young people, being inclusive, getting consent.

Provide your answer...

2. Issues of privacy and confidentiality.

Provide your answer...

3. Feeding back and disseminating.

Provide your answer...

Now for some practical pointers. How will you support the children or young people to do their own research? In the box below, you will see four important preparatory steps:

Box 2

1. Read around the topic you wish to investigate. Find out who else has done studies on your subject. What have they found? How will this inform your project?
2. Consult the children or young people about how they would like to participate. What methods, techniques and materials will you offer that are appropriate?
3. Think about the children or young people who will participate. Will they need any particular training?
4. Do a small-scale project or 'taster' first. Piloting your project will help to make a better study, as it will allow you to refine the project and increase the likelihood of success.

The [Our Voices website](#) offers you some useful links to research planning which elaborate on the pointers offered above. The link to the website is also in Session 4, along with other sources of help and support for planning your research.

Here again is Meera, whom you met in Session 2. In this video, she is talking a bit more about the project she carried out in school during her teacher training. Think about the preparatory steps you have just been looking at in Box 2 above, as you watch, and consider how Meera might have tackled them as she prepared her research project. When you have finished watching, try the activity which follows.

Video content is not available in this format.



Activity 5

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

Which of these statements below is an accurate summary of the research Meera was doing? Select as many as you think are correct.

- ☐ Meera was conducting some research in collaboration with a University.
- ☐ Meera was researching as an individual.
- ☐ Only four students had given consent to participate in her project.
- ☐ The purpose of her research was to build students' confidence.
- ☐ The purpose of her research was to seek the students' opinions on some software.
- ☐ The students were able to contribute their ideas on how they would prefer to learn.

Answer

Answers to Activity 5: accurate statements of the research Meera was doing.

Correct	Incorrect
Meera was conducting some research in collaboration with a University.	Meera was researching as an individual.
The purpose of her research was to seek the students' opinions on some software.	Only four students had given consent to participate in her project.
The students were able to contribute their ideas on how they would prefer to learn.	The purpose of her research was to build students' confidence.

This project may have been initiated by adults (in other words, it was not 'child-led'), but apparently the Year 7 (Y7) students gained much from it. How does Meera ensure this? Note down your answers to the question in the box below.

What does Meera say that indicates that she was putting the voices of the students first? How did she listen effectively?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

She explains how they talked of a range of ways they would prefer to learn, and that these were ways she had not considered. She 'opened up a space' for them to communicate. This indicates that she was attuning to them.

2 Getting started on my own research

You have now learned about the principles that should underpin good research with and by children, and thought about how to plan a project you would like to undertake. Now you are going to focus on how to get started.

When you want to embark on a research project, it is important, first, to carry out a *literature review*: this means reading around to find out whether any projects similar to yours have already been carried out, and what they revealed. Did they investigate exactly what you plan to investigate? Are there any 'gaps' that your project will address, or perhaps you think you could do it better? Reading around also means looking at existing theories in your area. These theories are often referred to in research projects, so it is important for you to be aware of them and to become familiar with them, but you must also be critical and ready to identify the possible faults as well as the merits in these theories. The box below sums up the steps you take when conducting a literature review:

Box 3: Literature Review: 5 steps

1. Choose the topic you want to investigate.
2. Talk to colleagues about it.
3. Read 5 articles related to your topic.
4. Make notes and comments on the articles.
5. Ask yourself: Is my topic still relevant? Do I still wish to pursue it?



Do you know where you might start to look for relevant material, in order to do your Literature Review? The [Our Voices website](#) has links to useful resources, or one of the links below could be relevant for you:

- <https://www.scie.org.uk/> Social Care Institute for Excellence
- <https://www.scout.org/> World Scouts organisation
- <https://www.nice.org.uk/> National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education> Department for Education

Carrying out a literature review is a necessary task for anyone embarking on research, but it is also a fascinating and rewarding experience. You have access to so much material on

the Internet, and you can also subscribe to relevant journals, publications and libraries. It is an essential way of establishing what findings are already in existence, and of justifying your reasons for carrying out your project.

3 Shier: A model for participation.

One researcher whom you may well meet as you do your Literature Review is Shier, well-known for his (2001) frame of reference for participation.



He drew this up to offer a means of ensuring an integrated approach to children and young people's participation in research that affects their lives. From the lowest level – 'children are listened to' – to the highest – 'children share power and responsibility for decision making' – Shier frames questions for adults to consider when planning or evaluating projects with, about and by children and young people.

Read carefully Shier's framework in the box below, then use the activity which follows to evaluate and reflect on what you have read.

Box 4

Level 1: children are listened to

Are you ready to listen to children?

Do you work in a way that enables you to listen to children?

Is it a policy requirement that children must be listened to?

Level 2: children are supported in expressing their views

Are you ready to support children expressing their views?

Do you have a range of ideas and activities to help children express their views?

Is it a policy requirement that children must be supported in expressing their views?

Level 3: children's views are taken into account

Are you ready to take children's views into account?

Does your decision-making process enable you to take children's views into account?

Is it a policy requirement that children's views must be given due weight in decision making?

Level 4: children are involved in decision-making processes

Are you ready to let children join in your decision-making processes?

Is there a procedure that enables children to join in your decision-making processes?

Is it a policy requirement that children must be involved in your decision-making processes?

Level 5: children share power and responsibility for decision making

Are you ready to share some of your adult power with children?

Is there a procedure that enables children and adults to share power and responsibility for decisions?

Is it a policy requirement that children and adults must share power and responsibility for decisions?

Activity 6

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

How reliable do you think Shier's framework is as a way of ensuring that children and young people will be able to engage fully with the research? Explain your thinking.

Provide your answer...

What would you change, if anything?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

One criticism of this framework is that it is presented as a linear process, when in reality things don't quite work that way.

Another key criticism is that the questions are aimed at the adults, not the children or young people. Your work through this course so far will have shown you that this will not necessarily lead to a good quality research project.

Have a look at [Hart's earlier \(1997\) model, the Ladder of Participation](#). Compare it with Shier's framework.

Which do you prefer? Can you give two or three reasons for your preference?

Provide your answer...

If these activities have sparked your interest particularly, try carrying out your own search by typing key words such as 'participation' and 'children' into your search engine.

4 The value of children's and young people's participation

Remembering the TRREEE principles you learned in the opening video, so far you have been looking at how you need to **Trust** the children and young people and **Respect** their ability to share in your research. You know that they have the **Right** to be fully included in issues that affect their lives, but you also need to be aware of the need to address any **Ethical** issues as you plan and carry out your research.

Now you are going to concentrate on those last two Es, namely children's and young people's **Expertise** and **Experience**. Their research can produce findings that surprise adults, and the results can mean that adults have better understandings of children and young people's experiences and their environments.

Here are two more video clips of the interview with Meera, who is researching with Year 7 (Y7) students. Take notes as you watch and answer the following questions: What methods does she use to record the students' views? How did these methods demonstrate the students' expertise? Were they effective? Why/why not? Note your thoughts in the box below.

Video content is not available in this format.



Activity 7

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

What methods does Meera use to record the students' views?

Provide your answer...

How did they demonstrate the students' expertise?

Provide your answer...

Were they effective? Why/why not?

Provide your answer...



By handing the 'safe space' to the students to express their own views, Meera is putting herself in a position to have her own views or preconceptions challenged. If you are an adult planning to carry out some research with children or young people, how do you feel about that? Are you ready to have an open mind? Meera found that her own students were empowered to express their views about communication in the classroom, and this led her to feel that she had gained a great deal, professionally, from her research.

Activity 8

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

Watch Meera now as she talks about what she gained from the research she was carrying out with the Y7s. Think about the last two **E**s in the TRREEE principles: how are the students demonstrating their expertise? What are they sharing of their own experience?

Video content is not available in this format.



Expertise:

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Meera was able to see the students' own perspectives on their learning. They were empowered to express a range of ways they would like to learn. They demonstrated their own expertise; they showed how they were experts in their own lives.

Experience:

Provide your answer...

Discussion

They began to feel valued in the teaching and learning process. They shared their own experiences and gained experience in researching, too.

5 Some examples of research presentations

Another way that children and young people can demonstrate their expertise is in the quality of the presentations they prepare to illustrate their research projects. Sometimes adults can be sceptical of their abilities to contribute to, or to carry out research successfully. However, they have their own experience of the issues under question and this reinforces their ability, their competence, to present findings that are valuable and valued. Children and young people's competence can be seen as different from that of adults: it is not necessarily lesser, and in some areas it may be greater. Remember the Art project you read about in Session 2, where the adult perspective was an obstacle to the children's expression, and the overall result was frustrating and unsuccessful.

In Session 1 you watched a video of some children talking about their own research projects. Here you are going to have a look at a sample of their powerpoint presentations. As you look through them, consider how the TRREEE (Trust, Respect, Rights, Ethics, Expertise, Experience) principles underpin the children's projects. Note in what way the young researchers have planned and prepared their research, and how they show understanding of ethical issues and a high level of sensitivity towards research participants.

- [Opinions about Football](#)
- [Care in the Community](#)
- [Boys' and their Mothers' opinions about street dogs](#)
- [Year 4 children's opinions on ipads and their learning](#)

Research carried out by children and young people can bring about changes to their lives and offer ideas as to how things could be done better in future. There are challenges in achieving such changes, but examples can be found of projects that have influenced organisations, policies and systems. One such example is a youth-led participatory action research project focussing on increasing governmental support for indigenous adolescents in Guatemala, which led to all mayoral candidates signing an agreement that they would implement the adolescents' policy proposal to fund their Office of Childhood and Adolescence. You can find a fuller description of this, and similar projects, [here](#):

And finally: it is important to recognise that children and young people have a right to express a view, but that sometimes they might choose not to, and this should be respected. Not all children will want to express a view or to undertake their own research. If the right to participate is to be upheld, however, all children should be given the opportunity; it is not acceptable to limit the opportunity to some children and exclude others.

You are nearly at the end of this Session, which has focussed on the TRREEE principles which should underpin your research. Can you remember what they are? What have you learned from all the materials in this Session that will guide you as you start to plan your research project?



Figure 4

Activity 9

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

Note three key things you have learned from what you have read and seen so far in this session:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Based on what you are planning to do, how you will use this new knowledge to influence your project?

Provide your answer...

6 Summary of Session 3

In the next Session, you will be starting to work on what you need to do to embark on your own research. Before you move on, take some time to check that your notes are in order, and go back over any activities you have done in this Session that, you feel, would merit further work or another look.

Finally, take some time to reflect on the principles you have been looking at in this Session and make notes on how you will be able to ensure that you adhere to them as you carry out your research:

Activity 10

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

What are the underpinning principles as outlined by TRREEE?

Provide your answer...

How can I ensure that the children or young people are fully involved in the research project I have in mind?

Provide your answer...

Now get started with [Session 4](#).

Session 4: Time to get started

Introduction

You have reached the final session in this course, but really this can be the beginning for you, where you start to organise your own research project. All the work you have been doing so far will have shown you that 'research' is not just something abstract and academic - it can be the inspiration for action that can result in change. Research involving children and young people is an important vehicle for adults to gain better insight into the everyday lives of those children and young people, and how they understand the world. It is a way of helping them to be heard; conceptualising them as researchers in their own right creates the conditions for them to participate in research in ways they choose. They can lead research themselves, shaping all aspects of a project from choosing their topic through to sharing their findings. They can also participate in shared research projects as informed participants, advisors and co-researchers, contributing to a spectrum of different research approaches.

Adults are often surprised to find how much insight children and young people have, and that even very young children can contribute meaningfully to research. Adults should, therefore, actively seek out opportunities for children and young people to express their views in ways which feel safe and supportive. You remember, from Session 1, how children and young people have the right to have a say, but it is more than that. In Session 2 you examined various ways of ensuring that children's and young people's voices are heard. For them to participate fully, and to put their UNCRC rights into practice, requires:

- Space: They must be given the opportunity to express a view
- Voice: They must be facilitated to express their views
- Audience: The view must be listened to
- Influence: The view must be acted upon as appropriate

Always remember that children and young people are experts in their own lives. Their participation leads to better research and offers them the chance to express their views with the confidence that they will be heard.

If you are in any doubt, have a look at Joshua Bingwa's presentation about 'what makes us different' and imagine how the engagement and enthusiasm of a young person like him will inspire you as you conduct your research. The clip lasts a little over six minutes so you may not watch it in its entirety; nevertheless, as you do watch, think about how Joshua's enthusiasm for his research has led him to develop his skills and knowledge, and to convey his message with such confidence and sophistication.

View at: [youtube:3WKlaMJae0g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WKlaMJae0g)

Video 1 Joshua Bingwa: What Makes us Different

As you work through this session, you will be starting to shape your own ideas for a research project and looking at practical and personal considerations, but as you do this, keep in mind the bullet points above, and the TRREEE principles you studied in Session 3, which should be the foundation of your research.

By the end of this session, you should be able to:

- list the four key elements which summarise how children and young people can effectively participate in research that affects their lives
- summarise your research plan in a draft document
- link the outline of your plan with the TRREEE principles.

1 Taking that first step

Where do you start? As with any first step, it is wise to see if you can find some support, or someone with experience that you can turn to as you shape your ideas and get your project off the ground.



You have already met Meera, who was researching in a school with Year 7 students. Watch her now as she talks about getting started with a project. What sources of support does she mention? Does she give the impression that doing a research project can be a lonely business?

Video content is not available in this format.



Activity 1

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

What does Meera say about her experience in the school where she was working? Tick any of the statements below that are correct.

- ☐ You have to make an application to do a research project.
- ☐ It is possible to do a research project on your own.
- ☐ The Research Journal is a good source of support for teachers carrying out research in Education.
- ☐ Teachers have found it difficult to get support from colleagues in school.
- ☐ Doing research has proved a good way of disseminating findings and sharing good practice in the school.

- Teachers can contribute the findings from their projects to the Journal.

Knowing where you can find the sort of support Meera is talking about will be a tremendous help to you, particularly as you get started. If you are not working in a school environment, take some time, now, to think about what support is available to you. Is there a Research Journal in your area of expertise? Might you join with a colleague to do your project? Do you know a friend or colleague who has already carried out some research in your area and might be willing to advise or guide you?

2 What are the foundations necessary?

As well as the support you might have access to, think about the ways you can prepare yourself for the tasks you envisage. Remember the TRREEE principles you learned about in Session 3, and consider how you will ensure that the children or young people's voices are heard, and that they are able to express themselves with confidence.

Activity 2

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

Watch Meera now as she talks about what she considers to be important foundations for successful research with her Y7 students. In the activity which follows, see if you can select the appropriate words to complete the summary of what she has to say, and at the same time consider your own area of expertise. If you are not working in a school environment, how might you tackle the issues she identifies?

Video content is not available in this format.



Interactive content is not available in this format.

It is interesting to note how Meera observes that the 'community' feeling she establishes with her students extends beyond the classroom. The students are already part of the school 'community,' but it seems that the rapport Meera has built with them, and the shared trust she mentions, have contributed to a sense of sharing and community built on the research project they are all engaged in which goes beyond the school environment itself. Think about the value of this sense of community; how might this be established in your own situation, how you might go about achieving such an environment of sharing and trust? Put your thoughts in the box below.

How will you build a rapport between the adults and the children or young people?

Provide your answer...

3 Am I prepared to change?

Looking at things differently and being able to adopt different viewpoints are essential skills for anyone wishing to carry out research. You need to have an open mind when you set out on your enquiry, so that you are receptive to the ideas and opinions of the children, young people or adults you are working with. You may already have started to think about your own situation differently, as you worked through the activities in this course. You will probably find that you continue to adapt your point of view as you carry out the research itself. This can be a very positive experience.

Activity 3

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

Meera gives us a good example of this change of perception. How has her perspective of her role changed, or developed? Watch the short video clip, then try the activity which follows.

Video content is not available in this format.



in a different light.
from the routine tasks of her job.
about the impact she is having.
is really enlightening.

Match each of the items above to an item below.

She views her practice
She is able to step back
She can think more deeply
Seeing things from the students' perspective

In this video, you heard Meera using two key terms; she said it was important to be 'reflective' and 'reflexive.' What do these terms mean?



You might already have a clear picture of what it is to 'reflect' on something. This means that you look back at what you have been doing and think about it; how well did it go? The ability to reflect is vital when you are conducting a research project, so that you can evaluate how effective you are being, and learn as you progress.

Being reflexive means that you relate your reflection to what you are doing as a researcher, and evaluate how successful it has been. Would you change anything next time? Could you have done anything differently? It means continuously adopting a critical approach to your research. What is your own impact on your research? This, too, is a vital part of researching and it is an approach that can be adopted by adults and the children or young people with whom they are working.

Whether you will be working in a school environment or not, take a few moments now to consider how your own role may change or develop as you carry out your research.

Activity 4

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

How might my role change as I listen to, and adopt, the views of children and young people?

Provide your answer...

4 What obstacles may I face?

It is very important that your enthusiasm, and interest in the topic you wish to investigate, drive you and support you through your project. However, it is equally valuable to consider, right from the start, the potential obstacles that may arise. Of course, sometimes these are unexpected, but as you have been working through this course you will probably have already identified things that might come up which could hinder you as you start on your research project



The major issue, perhaps, will be time. Time to prepare, time to carry out the research, time to put together your findings. If you are aware that this is an issue, you should be able to factor it in to your project planning and execution. Here is Meera again, sharing her practical experience. The major 'obstacle' she refers to is time.

Activity 5

Allow approximately 15 minutes.

As you watch, listen out for the details of what takes the time. She is working in a school environment, so if your area of expertise is different, consider how you will set aside time to cover the issues she refers to. Then, try the activities which follow.

Video content is not available in this format.



The seven statements below summarise what Meera says in the video when she talks about the time she devoted to her Y7 project in her school. They are in the wrong order; can you rearrange them so that they appear in the order in which she offered them in the video?

6
2
7
3
5
1
4

Match each of the items above to an item below.

Being aware of, and catering for those who do not wish to participate.

Getting the students' consent.

Being open and candid, and justifying the research with the students.

Making sure parents are informed.

Making sure the literature is fed through the project and her practice.

Fitting the research around the existing demands of her job.

Getting all forms in and ready before starting to collect data.

Answer

1. Fitting the research around the existing demands of her job.
2. Getting the students' consent.
3. Making sure parents are informed.
4. Getting all forms in and ready before starting to collect data.
5. Making sure the literature is fed through the project and her practice.
6. Being aware of, and catering for those who do not wish to participate.
7. Being open and candid, and justifying the research with the students.

Now think about your own situation. What steps are you going to have to take, to prepare? Make notes for yourself against the key issues listed in the box below. In what order will you need to approach each step? Add any further practical details that you will need to prepare for, so that they do not become 'obstacles' to your progress.

1. Fitting the research around my normal role.
2. Organising the paperwork.
3. Catering for those who do not wish to participate.
4. Anything else?

5 Checklist for planning

In order to help you get your ideas and thoughts organised, click on the link below which will take you to a proforma with some key questions to help you in your planning. Write your own answers in the appropriate spaces (some ideas have been inserted for you, as guidance), then save it for future reference. You will find that you will be adding to it and amending it as you go along, but you might like to print this early version as inspiration as you start to plan your project.

[Proforma: checklist for planning](#)

6 End of course quiz

You are nearly at the end of your course! You have just worked hard to formulate your ideas into a plan of action, well done. This will prove a very useful starting point for you. Before you finally leave this course, you will be offered some further sources of information and support, but first, here is one more challenge for you: the end of course quiz. You might like to take some time to look back over the previous three sessions before you have a go, just to refresh your memory and revisit the work and activities you have been doing. Good luck!

[End of course quiz](#)

Open the quiz in a new window or tab then come back here when you've finished.

7 Summary of the course

Congratulations, you have now reached the end of the course!



You have seen how involving children and young people in research that affects their lives:

1. creates better research
2. fulfils children's and young people's rights
3. brings benefits for children and young people
4. empowers them to lead their own research and participate effectively in research with others.

You have looked at carrying out research from a practical as well as a theoretical point of view and we hope the examples and ideas you have been studying have been useful and inspiring. This course has demonstrated how you, as an adult practitioner or a young person yourself, could approach research with the children and young people you are already working with. We have highlighted the key issues and benefits of making that research as participatory as possible, and you have used all that you have been studying to help you formulate your own action plan. We hope that you now feel fully confident to embark on your own project and we wish you every success with it.

Throughout the course, you have encountered occasional references to the Our Voices website, which is designed to accompany and complement this course. There, you will find 'Research Planning Tools' for anyone who has an immediate research project in mind. Children or young people who are thinking of taking part in research will find 'Taking Part in Research' a particularly useful resource on this website. The Our Voices website takes a broader view of research with children and young people and the principles underpinning a spectrum of different research approaches with and by children and young people. This may give you further ideas about possibly developing and maintaining your own service which offers a response to future research requests from or on behalf of children and young people.

[Our Voices website](#)

Another valuable link is below; MyShout! was developed by Dr Cindy Kerawalla for the Children's Research Centre at the Open University to support young people (aged 12+) who want to carry out their own social science research. Through completion of online activities, it supports young people's understanding of the research process including the research question, methods, ethics, data collection, data analysis, and dissemination of findings.

[Supporting young researchers with 'MyShout!'](#)

Where next?

If you've enjoyed this course you can find more free resources and courses on [OpenLearn](#). You might be specifically interested in courses on [education and development](#).

New to University study? You may be interested in our courses on [education](#). You might be particularly interested in our [Postgraduate Diploma in Childhood and Youth Studies](#), or [MA in Childhood and Youth](#).

Making the decision to study can be a big step and The Open University has over 40 years of experience supporting its students through their chosen learning paths. You can find out more about studying with us by [visiting our online prospectus](#).

Tell us what you think

Now you've come to the end of the course, we would appreciate a few minutes of your time to complete this short [end-of-course survey](#) (you may have already completed this survey at the end of Session 2).

Glossary

CPD

Continuous Professional Development (usually specific days set aside for teaching staff to undergo training and development).

References

Carter, B., Satchwell, C., Simons, J., Bray L. (2015) 'Consulting With Children Prior To Designing Research: Is It Really Worth The Effort?'. *Archives of Disease in Childhood* O-136, 99 (Suppl 2), A76-A7.

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Case studies

Session 2

Case Study: WeCan2, Kellett, M.

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Appendices

What is the Mosaic approach?

The Mosaic approach uses a range of participatory visual methods, alongside observation and interviewing, to build up new understandings of young children's views and experiences of early childhood environments. Children under 5 are invited to take a researcher on 'tours' of their nursery, taking photographs and providing a 'running commentary' on their routine activities. They are asked to indicate who they typically meet and where they meet them, which rooms they have access to or not, and so on.

The children are placed in charge of the tour and how it is recorded: by photograph, audio recording or drawings. Combining the results from this and the other research tools in the Mosaic approach can lead to a process of discovery at an individual, institutional and professional level. There can be tangible and immediate benefits for individual children involved, in terms of understandings gained about children's interests and concerns within a particular space.

At an institutional level, the first study using this approach discovered the importance of the children's private spaces within the nursery, as well as the need to involve the children in planning the use of external play areas. In a subsequent study that focused on the design and review of learning environments (Clark 2010), the Mosaic approach revealed data that challenged professional assumptions about young children's capabilities and perceptions. One example arose over the understanding that primary colours were appropriate for a nursery, and related to assumptions about young children's limited awareness of subtleties of tone. Children's comments about the differences in tone between the colour of a piece of furniture shown in a photograph they had taken and the actual object challenged this assumption which had long been held by architects.

Sandy Fraser, Rosie Flewitt and Martyn Hammersley.

Case study: WeCan2

This case study will focus on participation by young people with learning disabilities. Between 2005 and 2008, young people in Blackpool and Devon, assisted and funded by Mencap, researched some of the difficulties they faced when seeking meaningful participation – difficulties in translating theory into practice and rhetoric into reality. For this project, called WeCan2, Allan Aoslin, Ross Baines, Alice Clancy, Lizzie Jewiss-Hayden, Ryan Singh and Josh Strudgwick looked at some of the barriers and problems faced by themselves and other young people when trying to participate, wrote a report on what they had found and suggested solutions to some of the difficulties they encountered.

Before they started their research, these young people undertook training in research methods, shaping their proposal and deciding on the best methods to carry out this research. They then went on to examine the barriers they faced when trying to participate. Although they, and other young people like them, were very keen to participate, they found that it was not always easy. They found that difficulties occurred when:

- people spoke too fast;

- minutes of meetings were not sent out in advance and had to be read during the meeting;
- minutes and agenda papers were produced with small print and no pictures and were hard to read;
- people used too many 'big words': for example, in one youth council meeting one of the researchers drew attention to the example of the phrase 'ethnically diverse';
- meetings were often scheduled straight after school and the young people were hungry and tired, which affected how well they could participate;
- meeting places frequently did not have good disabled access.

Having carried out this research the young people then designed a toolkit giving the adult organisers of youth group meetings simple practical solutions to some of these problems, such as big writing and pictures on the papers, breaks for food and drinks and a set of trafficlight cards for young people with a disability to use in meetings to let people know when there was a problem. If people spoke too fast or if a young person did not understand something, they could hold up a red card. If a young person needed to ask a question, they could hold up a card with a question mark on it. The red, green and yellow cards could also be used as voting cards for no, yes and unsure.

The WeCan2 group then went on to evaluate these measures and found increased levels of understanding, participation and a sense of being listened to. They found that, in general, people were taking the time to explain things more clearly, were giving out simplified information and were taking their views on board. Young people were sometimes asked to co-chair meetings, were consulted about the recruitment of adult workers and when they suggested changes to leaflets or web pages, they were made (Aoslin et al, 2008).

Kellett, M.

Proforma: checklist for planning.

Question	My answer	Timing	Additional notes and tips
What am I going to investigate?			
What is the key question I want to answer with my project?			
What age are the children/ young people (CYP) I will be working with?			
What methods will I use?		<i>When do I set these up?</i>	<i>e.g. Questionnaires? Discussions? Interviews with groups or individuals?</i>
Whose support might I need?		<i>When do I approach them?</i>	
Whose permission will I need?		<i>How long will this take to achieve?</i>	<i>e.g. Formal approval from an ethics committee?</i> <i>Consent from the CYP</i>
Where will I find out what has already been done?			<i>Literature review: sources?</i>

Who will I share my findings with?	<i>When will I be doing this?</i> <i>For how long will my project run?</i>	
What format shall I use to present my findings?		<i>e.g. A written report, a powerpoint presentation.</i>
Will I need help from others?	<i>When do I seek that?</i> <i>How long will this take to set up?</i>	<i>e.g. for analysing the findings and presenting the data.</i>
Will I need specific (additional) skills?	<i>When can I gain these skills?</i>	<i>e.g. taking images of my participants, video-ing.</i>