

Poverty Research Methods Course

Date: 15th -19th July 2019

Researching Educational Inequality from children's
perspective

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Outline and Learning outcomes

Overview

- Introduction to key tools in researching with children
- Ethical and practical considerations
- Q&A / Discussion

Learning outcomes

- Understanding of applying key qualitative research tools
- Understanding of Ethnographic approach
- Developing critical analysis of the research with children
- Developing critical awareness of the ethical considerations and issues of power in research

Studying educational inequality in rural context

Overview – mixed methods research

- 133 hh survey (2 sites)
- Participant observation
- Life histories
- Timeline studies
- Drawing
- Interviews

How does research with children differ from research with adults?

Researching educational inequality

Children's position in research

- Children as researchers (co-production)
- Children as research subjects
- Recognition of children as social actors in their own rights
(UNCRC 1989; James and Prout 1997; Hallett and Prout 2003; James, Jenks and Prout 1998; Taylor 2002)
- Historical and Philosophical overview (start with Kellett 2005)

Two influential examples on participation

Hart 1997 ladder of participation &

Chambers 1997 **PRA** (Participatory rural appraisal) / **PLA** (Participatory learning and action)

The practicalities of doing research : reflexivity in research

PRA exercise : **Whose reality count?** (Robert Chambers 1997)

Key principles

Relationship

Respect

Equality

Reflexivity

Openness

Flexibility

What is PRA useful for?

Context specific

Cost efficiency

Increased participation for stakeholders (particularly poor, illiterate, women, children, minority groups)

Diverse methods of it are responsive to oral culture

Utilises local material (familiarity of the tools to facilitate discussion)

Addresses power relations – between researcher and participants (leveller)

The practicalities of doing research : reflexivity in research

PRA exercise : **Whose reality count?** (Robert Chambers 1994;
1997)



+ Simple, less resources, familiarity of resources, fun, **flexible** (to be layered on with other resources e.g. photographs), to facilitate discussions , analysis e.g. child labour experiences, school experiences, offers ‘depth, richness and realism of [...] analysis’(Chambers 1994)

Applying the principles

With children – body mapping locating pain, happy and sad time maps, subjective experiences in school grounds , designing improvement on provisions etc.

Disadvantage – time consuming, collective experience rather than individual/limitations, questions on how to scale up

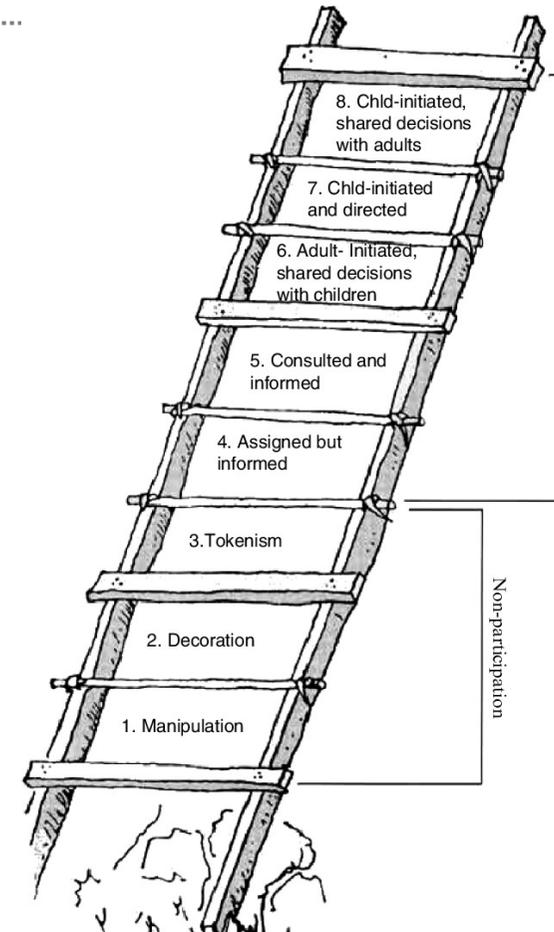
Manipulation –

If children have no understanding of the issues /understand their actions where children are consulted but given no feedback at all (Hart 1997)

Tokenism –

when children are given T-shirts related to some cause, and may sing or dance at an event in such dress, but have little idea of what it is all about and no say in the organizing of the occasion (Hart 1997)

Regarded as **influential** in moving the debate but criticised for ‘**overly simple** linear approach to the concept of participation’ (Kellett 2005:10)



Generating data and power relations in research

How do children perceive adults?

Considering the plurality of **childhood as experienced by different children across culture** and many other **contexts** children exist in dictates their perception of adults (as relatable/ friendly, unapproachable/ unfriendly, scary, threatening).

How do adults and children relate in various environment?

At home, communities, institutions (school, hospitals, prison, court, with police)

Generating data and power relations in research

How do **societal culture** and practices of **different institutional environment** have implication for relatedness between children and adults?

E.g. formality and informality of **relations** in schools.

In context of **family home** (related/ unrelated), **workplace** (relation with employer), **school** (teachers/peers) also socio-economy, racial, religion, ethnicity

All these *experiences of relatedness* and context between children and adults have implication for **how research is designed** and **how researchers engage with children**.

Generating data and power relations in research

What is the purpose of research with children?

- Should we have *voice* as objective for research / Can we *give voice* to children?
- What should the overall imperative of researchers should be?
- Data *extraction* / *transformation*? How do we reconcile *objectivity* and *ethics* in context of research?

Generating data and power relations in research

Theoretical debates around 'voice'

- **Voice** is a charged term – *empowerment*
- *Agency* – to transform events, situations, structural impositions (parallel to gender)
- Context of research for academic purpose vs. advocacy focused research (or should we all be advocates?)
- **Ethical** issues linked to **voice** e.g. what do we do with what we discover?
- Is writing it up enough/ **extractive**?
- What is in it for stakeholders in research (children)?

Generating data and power relations in research

Key arguments around notion of voice in context of the **insider-outsider** debate

Theorising Insider – Outsider debate in the sociology of knowledge

Early debate around - *Who can study groups like children* if adults are disqualified? being qualified, ascribed and acquired status/identity

Collective insecurities, Social basis of insider claims (Merton 1972)

Generating data and power relations in research

Ethical issues linked to **voice** e.g. what do we do with what we discover?

How does research harm children?

- **Emotional** (recalling events e.g. research with refugee children, orphan children),
- Physical – psychological (experiments) ,
- **Consequential** – e.g. loss of time and earning for working children, accusation by employer for ‘telling’) , potential labelling and marginalisation (being chosen for research)

Generating data and power relations in research

The practicalities of doing research : power relations

- Is the **knowledge reliable and valid?** Children may say things that please adults; children may **fear** or **want to protect** adults around them and **say very little**;
- Recognising issues of power relations - **developing rapport (with children and adults around them)**

Generating data and power relations in research

Core considerations in researching with children (power relations)

- Being clear on the objectives of the research, the questions asked, the roles children will play
- Allowing children's view to be expressed without it being influenced by the researchers (or other adults –e.g. teachers, parents) values and views
- Their familiarity with research tools
- Time

Generating data and power relations in research

Core considerations in researching with children (power relations)

- Should we treat them as ‘agentic’ and ‘competent’ ? What will we miss if we do so?
- Adult like – (equal with researcher? – power relations)

Researching educational inequality

**Increasing recognition of the need to be
'inclusive' – but, what are other practical
challenges we need to consider?**

Access, Data storage, language, disability...

Any more questions?

Researching educational inequality

Thank you and [useful References continued.....](#)

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