

Children as Researchers

Abstract

Children's own perspectives on their lives are largely absent from our knowledge and understanding of childhood which would be enriched if child perspectives were included. Training young children in research techniques gives them the skills to do their own research and thereby throw new light on the lives of children.

This has been pioneered in England at the Children's Research Centre, established at the Open University by Dr. Mary Kelleth in 2002, where groups of children as young as nine are trained in research techniques and carry out their own research exercises under supervision.

Since 2005 we have been applying these techniques to whole classes of ten year old children believing that all children of any ability or background should have this opportunity. We have monitored and evaluated this and presented our findings at various local and national symposia and in-service events. We feel that enabling children to achieve authentic research extends children's understanding of learning, improves their achievement and self esteem and also provides adults who work with them new insights into their lives in and out of school.

In addition we are involved in an E.C. Comenius project, 'CARIPSIE', [Children as Researchers in Primary Schools in Europe]. The main aim of this unique project is to explore, compare and identify the best ways to teach young children of all abilities in primary and pre schools the skills they need to become active researchers and how this can be embedded in the curriculum. It will encourage comparative research topics so that children from the seven project countries can learn from each other. The model of practice that emerges will be published, disseminated and used in subsequent in-service courses.

We are keen to learn from others about their experiences in this fascinating area.

Doug Springate Senior Lecturer in Primary Education, University of Greenwich, England
Karen Lindridge Deputy Head, Colyers Primary School, Bexley, England

Mr. Douglas Springate

Doug Springate, now retired from the University of Greenwich, had teaching experience in primary and secondary schools and has been a teacher trainer for the primary age phase for more than thirty years, lecturing in four institutions, including an American university. He was a Primary Ofsted Inspector. He has considerable international experience and is an active member and ex-chairman of ETEN, the European Teacher Education Network. He is currently further exploring the primary school as a democracy and researching and promoting the area of 'Children as Researchers', including an E.C. funded project with institutions from seven European countries. He is involved in activities at the British Council and the Open University.

Ms Karen Lindridge

Karen Lindridge has been a primary school teacher for twenty years and has taught all age groups from four [pre-school] to eleven. She is currently Deputy Head at Colyers Primary School, Erith. In addition she spent three years as a teacher trainer at the University of Greenwich where she specialised in early years and physical education. She is currently interested in the area of providing children with opportunity and empowerment which includes her involvement in the topic of children as researchers.