

Theorising Children's Participation: Learning Across Countries and Disciplines



A network to advance critical thinking on the participation of children in the public arena

The Children's Institute forms the South African arm of an international academic network on theorising children's participation. Hosted by the University of Edinburgh, the network comprises a multidisciplinary team from:

- Brazil (International Centre for Research and Policy on Childhood and the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro);
- India (University of Delhi and the Jamia Millia Islamia University);
- South Africa (Children's Institute, University of Cape Town); and
- the United Kingdom (universities of Edinburgh, Oxford, Bath, and Bristol).

The network aims to strengthen the theoretical underpinnings of the concept of "children's participation", a much-used and somewhat sloganised phrase within policy and practice in the last two decades.

Wrapping up in March 2011, the network's programme featured exchange visits to South Africa, Brazil and India to maximise engagement across disciplines and to ground theory in local practice. Visits included an intensive interdisciplinary seminar and interactions with local child participation projects. The seminars were intended to result in a publication of papers that contribute to aspects of theorising children's participation. Papers from the opening seminar in South Africa will be published in March 2011 in a special issue of the accredited journal *Perspectives in Education*.

In 2010 exchange visits took place to Rio de Janeiro and Delhi. The programme in India included presentations by network members, Indian academics and practitioners working with children's organisations; and visits to a boys' home, a children's club for older children and an after-school enrichment programme for younger children. Network members also attended a consultation with children on India's new draft policy for children. Shortened versions of the papers presented will be published in the Indian journal *Seminar*.

A book proposal has been accepted by Palgrave MacMillan. Members will contribute a chapter and a case study on children's participation in their respective countries. Network members have also drafted proposals for further cross-country research and training on different aspects of participation.

The project is funded by the Leverhulme Trust.