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Small Scale Investigation:

Make it meaningful: a mixed methods investigation exploring participation and how it impacts voice and agency in culturally diverse children.

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Abstract:

The research explored the impact of varying levels of participation on five culturally diverse Year 4 children in a German primary school. A participatory action research mixed methods design provided a child-friendly framework using photo elicitation, observation, 1:1 semi-structured interview and a fishbowl focus group to gather the children's experiences and perspectives. Adult perspectives were also sought to establish strong relationships and collective responsibility. Findings suggest that whilst children enjoyed increased voice and agency opportunity through meaningful participation, they relied on adult impetus to facilitate its sustainability.

Key words: participation, voice, agency, primary education, Germany.

Chapter 1: Introduction (901)

Germany has a long history of immigration (Civitillo et al. 2019) however, multicultural competence has never been an explicit priority in Germany's highly selective school system (Guntersdorfer, 2019). After just four years of primary school, the children are segregated into different educational pathways; *Gymnasium*, the academic pathway that leads to university, or *Gemeinschaftsschule*, the vocational route (Wischmann & Riepe, 2019). The Syrian migration crisis in 2015 and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 have intensified cultural diversity in German classrooms however, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment stipulations have remained constant, as has the demographic of monocultural Year 4 children receiving academic, *Gymnasium* recommendations (Wischmann & Riepe, 2019). This process is criticised throughout literature as being largely socially selective (Röbken, Schütz & Lehmkuhl, 2019).

Within my own organisation, teachers work in isolation, no data on cultural diversity is sought, and training opportunities cover subject content rather than pedagogic development (Plate & Peacock, 2021). Core subjects, Maths and German, dominate the timetable, have authority and accountability in the recommendation process and German language skills are a prerequisite for success. In my professional responsibility, a subject leader of non-core subjects, I have been a tokenistic guest at the recommendation conference for the last three years and noted the rarity of academic *Gymnasium* recommendations for culturally diverse children. One of the aims of this study was to gain understanding and knowledge directly from those involved in the teaching and learning process (Banks, Leach & Moon, 2005). Through valuing the perceptions of the children and adults involved, any hidden curriculum that governs teacher-student relationships (Giroux & Penne, 1979) can be challenged and transformed to address factors that impinge the learning (Leach & Moon, 2008) of this marginalised demographic.

Whilst researchers have investigated multiculturalism in German education (Rissanen et al., 2023; Civitillo et al., 2019; Guntersdorfer, 2019) few authors have focused on primary schools, (Wischmann & Riepe, 2019; Hüpping & Büker, 2014) and none have focused

directly on the perceptions of the children. During a pre-research meeting with the gatekeepers of this small-scale investigation, the author voiced a desire to focus on culturally responsive pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 2021) to be told that it was not relevant or required, as only 40% of children had migration backgrounds. With added sensitivity but unwavering determination, an effective if more generic focus was found in equality based, empowering, child centered participatory pedagogy (Lundy, 2007). The initial apathy to the topic provided motivation to conduct the study through the critical theory paradigm to not only increase consciousness of preparation for compliance but also to challenge its negative consequences in the classroom and beyond (Kemmis, 2006).

The research questions aimed to elicit knowledge appropriate to the study:

1. Do current pedagogic choices provide participatory opportunities for culturally diverse children in core and non-core subject lessons? If so, how?
2. What factors associated with meaningful participation positively impact learner voice and agency in culturally diverse children?
3. How can these factors shape school policy to facilitate sustainable participation for culturally diverse children?

The research questions were formed following a literature review, found in chapter 2, of pedagogy and its power to democratise knowledge (Safir & Dugan, 2021) and transform lives (Leach & Moon, 2008). My professional motivation as a rare minority teacher, being one of 1.4% of teachers in Germany to have a migration background, (Rissanen et al., 2023) and insider researcher focused on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) requirement that *all* children should experience conditions to facilitate quality education. Therefore, the study was designed to give space to an identified sample of five culturally diverse children in a Year 4 class in northern Germany to share their perceptions as they currently exist. Recognising that knowledge

is continuously constructed through social actions and interactions (Leach & Moon, 2008), the children were encouraged to experiment and co-create a participation intervention; make decisions as part of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998), discussed in chapter 3, and courageously disseminate their findings (Kemmis, 2006) and interpretations to an appropriate audience, documented in chapter 4.

My critical pragmatist positionality influenced a complex and messy research design. To achieve breadth and depth a mixed methods approach explored the connections and disconnections experienced by culturally diverse children. A participatory action research (PAR) framework, developing voice and agency emphasizing identities, nurturing belonging, and allowing active and meaningful participation was crucial to the ethos of the study. The study began with a reconnaissance phase to inform one full action research cycle. Thereafter, reflection on concurrent quantitative and qualitative data cross-validated findings to address the research questions.

Data was collected through lesson observations, 1:1 interview and a focus group, and encouraged the children to use photo elicitation, deep listening skills, voice, and tours inspired by the Mosaic approach (Clark, 2001) described in chapter 3. Valuing the perception of children as expert witnesses produced ideas that may expand practices in the setting (Leat, Reid & Lofthouse, 2015). A focus group provided opportunity to highlight institutional disparity that may prevent meaningful participation and disadvantage culturally diverse children and open critical conversations to secure better classroom conditions that make participation possible for all. Due to the age and specificity of the sample, ethical considerations were prioritised, highlighted in chapter 3 and transferability was the aim of this investigation, whereby the design, methodology and methods may be reproduced in other classrooms or year groups within the school and beyond.

Chapter 2: Review of the literature (2580)

2.1 Introduction and rationale

The main aim of a literature review was to gain prior knowledge of how participatory pedagogy meaningfully impacts culturally diverse children in primary classrooms. Identifying controversies and highlighting gaps in the literature informed the research questions, methodology and theoretical framework used to analyse the data. The following themes were identified and used to create subheadings for this chapter:

- What is pedagogy?
- What is meaningful participation?
- Participatory pedagogy and culturally diverse children
- Teacher Agency

A systematic review of the papers initially focused on empirical studies from 2015-2024 to reflect the impact of the 2015 Syrian refugee situation, the COVID-19 pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 on the German education system. To satisfy the specificity of the context, data from German primary classrooms were prioritized, however the search parameters were expanded due to limited numbers. Seminal papers on participation were sought, including Hart (1992), Shier (2001) and Lundy (2007, 2018) to establish how theory has progressed along its well-established continuum. International authors and studies on culturally responsive education were also included, whilst being mindful of differing sociopolitical landscapes and their influence on education systems. Literature pertaining to educational disparities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic was included to gauge whether increased consciousness of inequality experienced during global lockdowns has provided opportunity for change or whether hidden curriculums and historical norms continue dictate classroom practice. Using the Open University Library and Google Scholar search engines, searches were conducted in British English and German, and abstracts were judged against criteria of relevance: participation pedagogy, student voice, student agency, teacher agency, multicultural, intercultural, superdiverse, Germany.

2.2 What is pedagogy?

Commonly referred to as the ‘how’ of teaching, the literature agrees that pedagogy is a broad term influenced by many factors. The thoughtful selection of subject knowledge, school knowledge, methods and practices to engage learning (Simpson, 2018), pedagogy is influenced by the values of the individual teacher, the context in which they teach and the type of teaching and learning structures, curriculum and assessment expected within that context (Watkins and Mortimore, 2012).

Loaded with socio-political knowledge from these influences, the research demonstrates how pedagogies have the potential to limit or accelerate learning and social transformation. Researching in the USA, Safir & Dugan, (2021) select pedagogy through an anti-racist lens to transform learning and lives. In contrast, Graham et al., (2022) in Australia, select pedagogy to nurture student recognition and wellbeing. Relevant to the context of this study, the German literature acknowledges that classrooms tend to practice teacher-led pedagogies, with whole class teaching rooted in control, resistant to reform and openly designed to educate the few (Plate & Peacock, 2023; Behrmann, 2021; Alexander, 2008). Freire’s (1970) belief that no educational process is neutral is supported by these powerful hidden curriculums, socialising children to understand power structures within the structure of the school (Giroux & Penna, 1979).

As Biesta (2015) reminds us, learning is also a wide-ranging phenomenon needed to prepare all children for the complexities of modern life and opens the critical debate surrounding pedagogical choice, questioning what is knowledge, why is it valuable and to whom? Global literature recognises that students are not homogenous groups (Hüpping & Büker, 2014) but debates not only how to facilitate effective teaching and learning to all children through pedagogical choice but also the consequences of not doing so. Teachers unable or unwilling to address any mismatch between student needs and organisational capacity through pedagogical experimentation reinforce hierarchy and status in classrooms, limit higher-order thinking, metacognition,

(Husbands & Pearce, 2012) and reduce a sense of justice in individual children (Biesta, 2015).

It is widely acknowledged that the teacher has the highest level of influence on pedagogy in the classroom (Hattie, 2023; Safir & Dugan, 2021; Cook-Sather, 2020), and is dependant on how the teacher sees the children (Rissanen et al., 2023; Husbands & Pearce, 2012). Powerful hidden curriculums promote distinctions between students based on imputed intelligence and probable ability (Giroux & Penna, 1979) and marginalised groups often experience low expectations from their teachers and in turn have low expectations of themselves (Quinn & Owen, 2016). The literature concurs that effective pedagogy is informed through a reciprocal relationship between teacher and student that acknowledges the funds of knowledge (Gilde & Volman, 2021; Subero et al., 2015) a child brings to class, in terms of language, histories, experiences and voice (Simpson, 2018). Respecting identities is not simply good pedagogical practice but through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) it is a legal requirement (Lundy, 2007).

2.3 What is meaningful participation?

The literature concurs that participation is an ambiguous, wide-ranging concept intricately linked to student voice and agency, creating space and capacity for those who want it, to be democratically involved in their own lives and social contexts (O'Brien et al., 2024; Müller-Kuhn et al., 2021; Quinn & Owen, 2016, Bahou, 2012).

In 1989, UNCRC provided legal structure to how participation is specific to children. Three seminal papers provided the basis of understanding of how the participation continuum is perceived in an educational context, beginning with Hart's Ladder of Participation (1992) with eight prescriptive levels from 'manipulation' to 'meaningful'. Shier's Pathway to Participation (2001) built on Hart's largely theoretical stance by establishing a reciprocal, practical framework for teachers to self-reflect on *openings*, to

explore practical *opportunities* with the children in the classroom and to question *obligations* or lack thereof within an organisation. In addition, Lundy's (2007) critique of Hart, fine-tuned the continuum to consist of only four participatory criteria: space, voice, audience and influence, closely referencing the UNCRC. Adaptations of these theories and devices support the framework of this small-scale investigation.

2.3.1 Voice

The UNCRC states that meaningful participation requires verbal or non-verbal involvement where opinions are aired, listened to, and given 'due weight'. Many authors imply that the scepticism towards child capacity to give an opinion heavily influences the commitment to participation in the classroom (Graham et al, 2022; Quinn & Owen, 2016). Whilst exploring the Mosaic approach, Clark (2001) disputes this and highlights children as skillful communicators, and recommends that adults adjust their listening skills to hear them. Researching political voice and civic education in primary education, in Germany, Abendschön (2015), correlates participatory practice with abstract knowledge development, where children, aged six to eight, were perfectly able to understand their civic rights and give opinions relating to political knowledge. Capacity and capacity building is celebrated as a function of participatory pedagogy and research (Hargreaves et al., 2021; McVeety & Farren, 2020; Lundy, 2018; Maguire et al., 2018) and requires adults to take positive action to elicit children's views (Shier, 2001). Indeed, Hart's (1992) original criteria for child participation required 'due weight' to be granted to avoid manipulation, decoration and tokenism, the lower rungs of the ladder with a non-participatory classification.

2.3.2 Tokenism

Although definitions of manipulation and decoration are uncontestedly non-participatory, tokenism is heavily debated in the literature. Shier (2001) and Lundy (2007) acknowledge that perfunctory voice, without choice of topic, style of communication,

and discernable impact is non-participatory. However, unlike Hart, Shier's (2001) pathway to participation does not list any levels of non-participation, only that meaningful participation must combine voice and agency. Certain researchers link tokenism to student disengagement, not just in learning but also in democratic procedures in adulthood (Quinn & Owen, 2016), directly contradicting the overarching aim of participatory pedagogy, to foster democratic cultures and citizenship skills (Graham et al., 2022). In 2018, however, Lundy revisits and defends tokenism when considering collective decision-making. Meaningful participation addresses power relations between adults and children and tokenistic involvement may be a necessary minimum level to engage larger groups of children on route to more critical, meaningful and collaborative participation.

The middle rungs of Hart's (1992) ladder relate to evolving capacities where children are involved in gathering information and in consultation. Finally, cultivated through collaboration with adults, the highest rungs equate to children designing and directing their own projects. Certain authors question the practicalities of Hart's (1992) ladder to achieve movement from one level to the next (Caetano et al., 2020; McVeety & Farren, 2020; Bahou, 2012). Shier's (2001) alternative more practical model has been adopted across the literature to encourage collaboration between children and adults to achieve meaningful participation but acknowledge that space (Lundy, 2007) must be made available, usually by adults, to support the notion.

2.3.3 Agency

Although much of the literature focuses on voice, Cook-Sather (2020) argues that voice is not only a concept but a set of practices to inform responsible action and therefore meaningful participation also requires agency. In her critical enquiry, Bahou (2012) agrees that voice must be accompanied by agency but that only through collaboration with adult allies providing authentic audience, can children genuinely engage in active

and responsible decision making. Whereas Quinn & Owen (2016) suggest that teacher, student, and other stakeholders need to develop authenticity and cultivate relationships for collective decision-making necessary for participatory pedagogy to prepare for civic responsibility.

Interestingly, Wischmann & Riepe's (2019) ethnographic study explores resistance agency as a necessary aspect of participation. Their critical study calls for stronger awareness of why and how children may be impacted by structural inequalities and choose not to participate. According to the UNCRC every child has a right to participate in all aspects of their own lives (Lundy, 2007). However, the content and purpose of learning tasks set in classrooms are predetermined by curriculum, pedagogy and assessment dictated by adults (Simpson, 2018, Biesta, 2015) often resulting in disinterest and disenchantment in learning.

2.4 Participatory pedagogy and culturally diverse children

Participatory pedagogy is not a new concept (Hart, 1992) and has an established theoretical base to provide child centered, inclusive education that stretches along a broad continuum. This study focuses on where culturally diverse teaching and learning sits on that continuum. Literature from the USA is vast and shows historical depth and sociopolitical reflection. Safir & Dugan, (2021) propose a critical, participatory 'Street Data' paradigm to facilitate political voice and deep listening to challenge racism and discrimination in school and the wider community. The student centric approach recommends tested tools that gauge identity, belonging and status within the classroom. Contrastingly, the European studies suggest the continuity of common tokenistic trends (Rissanen et al. 2023; Caetano et al,2020; Civitillo et al. 2019; Szelei et al., 2018) that perpetuate stereotypes.

Lundy (2007) highlights practical barriers to student voice particularly in this demographic where second language learning is typical. This was highlighted by many authors as producing negative impact on culturally diverse children (Shier, 2001;

Hüpping & Büker, 2014). Within the parameters of a set curriculum, flexible pedagogy and set assessment criteria the qualification domain of educational purpose (Biesta, 2015) has the dominant emphasis in core subjects. Failing to make room for socialisation and subjectification is perpetuating existing inequalities. Much of the literature highlighted attainment deficiencies being attributed directly to the child, their families, or their culture (Gilde & Volman, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 2021) and as a direct consequence were cited in the German literature as reasons for recommending a vocational future rather than an academic one (Behrmann, 2021).

Many studies throw light on the considerable gap between theoretical good intentions of teachers and classroom practice. Ladson-Billings (2021) specifies that culturally diverse classrooms require academic achievement, cultural competence and critical consciousness for and from all students. Through meaningful participation, student voice and agency can be heard, societal structures critiqued, and action planned to produce positive changes, in theory. In practice, Hüpping & Büker, (2014) state that cultural diversity is often treated superficially in classrooms, exoticising students, contributing to misrepresentation and creating conflict in the playground. Szelei et al., (2019) states that challenging 'otherness', requires learning opportunities to turn student voice into a pedagogical tool providing space for multiple perspectives and values to be heard and collective agency to influence social cohesion and inclusive education (Santos et al., 2014).

Certain studies tackle the issue of parity of participation focusing on marginalised groups. Hargreaves, Buchanan & Quick (2021) highlight three pillars of participation, listing equality of material resources, status and political voice as standard for meaningful participation. Although the study sample was of lower achieving primary children, many comparisons can be drawn highlighting participatory pedagogy as a versatile tool that could connect the fields of inclusive education. The COVID-19 pandemic compounded longstanding educational disparities for many marginalised

groups. Writing in 2021, Safir and Dugan listed hybrid learning, termination of standardised testing and a rise of shadow education, hiring of private tutors, as factors causing disengagement in the education process. Ladson-Billings (2021) challenges educators to see the pandemic as an opportunity to re-set pedagogical practices. Citing Regio Emilia pre-schools as an example of educational transformation out of adversity, Ladson-Billings proposes diverse, participatory, cooperative problem-centered approaches to address concerns such as war, environmental disasters, racism and economic instability through exploration and discovery rather than authoritarian directives.

2.5 Teacher agency

Many studies have shown that creating a participatory classroom climate is dependent on the agency and mindset of the teacher (Simpson, 2018). Müller-Kuhn et al. (2021) mixed-method research in Swiss primary schools found teacher encouragement to be the most influential criteria for meaningful participation. However, power, status and authority of the teacher are experienced differently through participatory pedagogy with common teacher perceptions stressing class disruption and undermined professionalism (Flutter, 2007) as opposition to its acceptance. Behrmann (2021) reports that many teachers in Germany see themselves as status preservers and are convinced of the fairness of the highly selective system and its teacher centric pedagogies and rote learning. More specifically, Civitillo et al., (2019) implies that colour-evasive beliefs commonly ignore cultural diversity in German schools not only reflecting teacher beliefs but also school policies and classroom practices. Recognising this as an international trend, Ladson-Billings (2021) reports that schools are principal sources of categorical inequality often due to teacher discretion.

Re-thinking traditional roles, and balancing children and adults as partners in education (Scarparolo & MacKinnon, 2022) requires unlearning long-standing assumptions and

educational philosophies (Plate & Peacock, 2023) on the part of the teacher, requiring time, patience, and effort, all of which are in short supply. However, many qualitative studies report positive effects of participatory pedagogy in primary classrooms, whereby individual and collective excitement, energy and ideas flow and children flourish. Caetano et al., (2020) conducted a critical action research study enquiring how participation transforms practice for culturally diverse children and their teachers through self-reflection and interaction. Championing Shier's (2001) five levels of participation, they found increased enthusiasm and engagement whilst respecting the worth of working at every level on the participation scale for this marginalised group.

2.6 Conclusion

Whilst the theory of participatory pedagogy for culturally diverse children is sound, this literature review has presented the complexities of combining two established educational factors in practice. Drawn from global literature spanning 30 years, cultural diversity continues to demand attention and improvement to satisfy the rich potential it has to offer (Safir & Dugan, 2021) in the classroom and across communities.

Meaningful participation offers a political and democratic process by which to achieve social cohesion and enlighten children to their civic responsibilities. This simplification requires further study to monitor how authenticity, inclusion, and power as key drivers to make participation meaningful, can produce critical, intergenerational learning communities that connect schools to the aspirations of those that attend them (Bahou, 2012). This review has highlighted positive and negative factors relating to participatory pedagogy and cultural diversity in primary education, some of which will support data analysis and interpretation in this small-scale investigation.

Chapter 3 : Research Design (2969)

3.1 Introduction

This research is positioned within a critical theory paradigm. Influenced by my belief that commonly held values and assumptions lead to false understandings, and power disparity, critical research critiques and challenges knowledge to create something better (Willis, 2012). My research questions reflect this stance, and aim to illuminate power relations, address unwelcome truths (Kemmis, 2006) and seek structural shift. I have chosen participatory action research (PAR) as an active, inclusive, methodology to support child participation in knowledge production as well as to provide educational benefit by developing research as a pedagogical tool (Kim, 2017). In this chapter I will discuss how and why a critical, mixed methods, participatory action research design inspired by Clark's (2001) Mosaic approach is an appropriate framework for culturally diverse primary school children and describe the methods and research instruments used in this study.

3.2 Philosophical framework

My ontological viewpoint is open, values diversity, and encourages empathic engagement in the pursuit of understanding. This relativist perspective (Corbetta, 2011), holds that knowledge is mediated by power and inextricably linked to the social, cultural, and historical events that define our particular identities (Cook-Sather, 2018). A relative ontological attitude recognises that uniform reality cannot be assumed, but rather is relative to individual viewpoints in each context, and meaning is formed through social interaction and power dynamics (Grix, 2020). This study therefore explores the realities of opportunity to participate meaningfully in their Year 4 learning of five culturally diverse children and their teachers and how history, culture and context impacts that to create an external reality (Willis, 2007) in need of critique.

My epistemological (Grix, 2020) position will explore how to uncover this knowledge. Adopting a critical theory paradigm, this study encourages collaboration and interaction among actors that have capacity to transform structural norms (Willis, 2007), by valuing divergent views of what it is to know, and honouring statutory obligations to the UNCRC (Lundy, 2007) that develop student voice and agency through meaningful participation.

3.3 Context

A politically charged avoidance of the word 'multicultural' is common in the school and across German society (Rissanen et al., 2023; Guntersdorfer, 2019). The gatekeepers for this study were reluctant to explore pedagogies specific to this demographic, implying cultural difference is irrelevant (Rissanen et al., 2023) strongly prioritising German language and *Lebenweise* (way of life) competencies (Guntersdorfer, 2019) across the curriculum. However, Germany also has strong democratic values. Much of the literature identifies participation as a democratic strategy with potential to benefit whole school communities (Plate & Peacock, 2021) and was therefore accepted by the gatekeepers and adopted by the author.

A further contextual factor pertinent to this study was its timing. The research project began six weeks after the participants received their secondary school recommendations. As an insider researcher, my knowledge of these children's attainment history cannot be unknown (Costley, Elliot & Gibbs, 2013). Exploring the experiences of five culturally diverse children, this study critiques how and why none received academic recommendations despite in some cases, positive academic attainment scores. As the staff observed patterns of 'deficit mindset' (Rege et al., 2020), misrecognition, and status subordination (Fraser, 2008 in Hargreaves, Buchanan, & Quick, 2021) negatively impacting learner identity (Compton-Lilly, 2006), the children's sociocultural backgrounds were highlighted as causal factors without self-reflection or critique, as is commonly described in the literature (Wischmann & Riepe, 2019). As a result, selecting PAR served as an engagement strategy and an empowering lived experience.

3.4 Design Frame – Participatory Action Research

Participatory action research (PAR) positions the children as experts in their own lives, (Schubotz, 2019) and as an overtly political framework (Brydon-Miller, 2002), emphasizes democratic dialogue and social action, using theory and practice to illuminate and transform inequity (Cohen et al., 2017).

Carried out by insider, work-based researchers that seek change (Bassey, 1992), PAR is relevant to educational studies. The cyclical, reflective nature lends itself to on-going, longitudinal studies (Cohen et al., 2017) consisting of phases of planning, acting, observation and reflection to initiate change and inform on-going investigation. This study was done over 8 weeks between April 2024 and June 2024, so time was a limiting factor. To accommodate this, the study consisted of a reconnaissance phase to collect current data that informed one single action research cycle where the findings would in turn, inform the planning of subsequent study.

Although this positionality and methodology were represented in the literature, (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017; Mincu, 2015) examples were rare in a primary context (O'Toole, 2023). However, as the divisive impact of the secondary school recommendation process increased on the identities and status of the culturally diverse children, the rationale for a groundbreaking study genuinely engaging their voices and perspectives was necessary and exciting. PAR centers on shared decision making, where the participants are not simply a source of data (O'Toole, 2023) but embark on shared-value research with method allocation based on enjoyment, reaction and collaboration (Mincu's, 2015) between stakeholders and the wider community.

A Year 4 class of 17 children undertook an inquiry-based learning task in their timetabled English lessons to explore participation. They formed a PAR community with the teaching assistant, and the class teacher led by the teacher-researcher. They collaborated on a participation intervention to evaluate its impact in the classroom.

Theoretical sampling (Barbour, 2022) was used to purposefully locate the participants into three subgroups, each containing one adult, enabling those with differing personalities, skills and backgrounds to share reflections and exercise their rights within the time available (Maguire et al., 2018). The teacher-researcher worked with five culturally diverse children whose involvement and reflections provided data for this study.

In line with ethical considerations all three subgroups undertook similar inquiry-based learning tasks and collectively reflected on the project as a community. The subgroups allowed more detailed observation, consultation and experimentation with child friendly methods, instruments, and practices before community agreement through democratic processes could be achieved. Brydon-Miller (2002) highlights disparity between researcher and participant as problematic in the practice of action research, as power and privilege maintain a hold over all human relationships. Recognising and challenging this within the PAR community and subgroups shaped the study's agenda and outcomes of the study, aiming to offer genuine participation whilst building skills and capacities (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017).

3.5 Methodology and research approach

As a pragmatist member of an intergenerational, superdiverse PAR community, I proposed a mixed methods design adapting Clark's (2001) Mosaic approach, with ideology taking precedence over methodology (Willis, 2007). Designed for children and adults to construct knowledge collectively and actively through deep listening, discussion and interpretation, the Mosaic approach is a multi-methods framework of verbal and non-verbal participatory tools (Clark & Moss, 2017) appropriate for the age and demographic in this practical enquiry (Hammersley, 2000).

German educational literature is dominantly quantitative (Plate & Peacock, 2021) and many positivist colleagues see great value in that data form, but this critical study

utilised quantitative and qualitative means to provide space for voices unheard in the purely quantitative domain (Tilley, 2019). A Foucauldian philosophy (Ball, 2019) where experimentation, self-awareness, and critical reflection *in* practice required a critical theory design to expose repressive structures of the hidden curriculum, to all stakeholders including those who have capacity to change them (Creswell, 2017). The age of the children, inexperience of the researcher and power distributions in the school were critically reflected on throughout the process.

3.6 Data Collection

This convergent mixed methods framework allowed contribution and supplementation of data across methodological and method continuums (Creswell, 2017). Observations, 1:1 semi-structured interview, walking tour and a focus group informed through photo-elicitation constituted a mixed methods approach. This practical inquiry (Hammersley, 2000) where those involved produced knowledge that directly applies to the topic and context, did so to facilitate inference transferability (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) where the findings and implications may be applied to other classes or schools.

3.6.1 Observation

Observation was the first piece of mosaic data gathered to gauge pre-intervention participation levels and address the first research question. The levels of participation were rated on an adapted version of Shier's (2001) Pathway of Participation (Appendix B). This instrument was used throughout the project to guide understanding and generate opinion, allowing fixed criteria to be viewed and recorded. This generated reliable comparative responses that formed the foundations of the deductive data collection (Cohen et al., 2017) providing validity for the positivists in the setting.

However, a snapshot of a complex open system such as this, cannot detect trends or transform outdated practices (Hammersley, 2006). Therefore, observation conducted through a critical ethnographic perspective, was used to begin the deep listening process and explore any empowering or alienating experiences the culturally diverse children may have had (May & Fitzpatrick, 2019) and were recorded in field notes.

The children were encouraged to exercise agency and creativity (Fox & Capewell, 2019) in line with critical PAR design. Using the class cameras the children each took photographs of the teaching and learning methods experienced in the lessons being observed. This provided evidence using another language allowing the children to demonstrate evaluation of their world and their priorities within it (Clark, 2001) showing ethical consideration of cultural sensitivity (Stutchbury & Fox, 2009).

Observation was repeated during the 'Our Town' participation intervention to gain intimate knowledge of the impact of pedagogic change. Field notes referenced voice and agency as corroborative data triangulating real voice data collected at interview. This overt method appeared to build trust and deep engagement (Harfitt, 2017) in the project and added to the legitimization (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006) of the mixed methods design.

3.6.2 Semi-structured interview

The 1:1 semi-structured interviews, provided an adaptable method for both quantitative and qualitative data production (Burton & Bartlett, 2011). To triangulate the observation data (Hammersley, 2006) the children placed their photographs against Shier's adapted criteria (Appendix B) to record perceived levels of participation. The results were recorded also using photo elicitation to reduce the written word conscious of the age and multilingual nature of the group.

The photos were used as prompts to generate deeper how and why qualitative data (Cohen et al., 2017) and elicit feelings associated with agency: identity, mastery, belonging, and efficacy using Safir and Dugan's (2021) template (Appendix D) in

response to the second research question. The conversations thereafter produced surprising data, also transcribed for thematic analysis, adding further information that the children thought interesting.

Acknowledging that interviews are open to power disparity (Spicksley, in Fox & Capewell, 2019), the children took control of their own interviews; the audio recording; the location; the allocated time; the photo selection; and the language spoken, resulting in full, open, and relaxed conversations. Utilitarian ethical considerations (Stutchbury & Fox, 2017) were paramount throughout the process and to preserve anonymity the children chose secret agent pseudonyms. The theme was colours and consisted of Red, Blue, Green, Purple, and Black. The adult pseudonyms were famous artists and consisted of Da Vinci, Monet and Kahlo. To enhance relations the teacher-researcher's secret agent pseudonym was Lowry.

The children and the adults were interviewed pre- and post- intervention. Although complex quantitative and qualitative data were required to answer the research questions, combining the methods enabled the children to take part in the data collection and its analysis. The photographs supported a re-balance of power, offered a two-way exchange between co-researchers rather than a more traditional interview approach (Burton & Bartlett, 2011).

3.6.3 The Intervention: 'Our Town'

Responding to the English curriculum topic 'In the Town', the PAR community designed and built a miniature urban space from recycled material, co-constructed with the wider community. The artwork and crafting formed other pieces of the Mosaic where non-verbal listening (Clark, 2001) was required to make meaning. The 'Our Town' project was presented as a walking tour of the English vocabulary and research skills learned over the duration of the project, to peers, parents and teachers. The pieces of the Mosaic were also presented to draw together the sources to gain deep understanding,

enter dialogue, reflect and interpret the research process with a broader audience (Clark, 2001). Whilst aware of deontological duties to disseminate the findings the PAR community were sensitive to utilitarian aims of confidentiality in this mapping process (Stutchbury & Fox, 2017).

3.6.4 Focus Group

A focus group addressed the final research question of how to sustainably practice participation and included the PAR community and two members of the leadership team. The literature stated that focus groups are problematic regarding power disparity and assumptions about a lack of children's capacity to offer opinions and make decisions. Therefore, it took on a fishbowl approach (Safir & Dugan, 2021) where key questions were discussed by a small discussion group under the gaze of the full group who were ready to comment once the discussion had ended. This provided space to make decisions as equals and achieve collective action.

3.7 Research Instruments: Word Clouds

Word clouds are text visualisation tools that display frequently used words more prominently than others (Cidell, 2010). In this research project word clouds had dual usage: as educational tools to encourage deeper thinking and discussion (Cooshna-Naik, 2022), and to revisit vocabulary and empower the children by recognising their own words in the analysis. They were then used as research instruments in the interviews whereby a range of interpretations based on this instant insight of the children's experiences were sought. The PAR community enjoyed this visual tool and promoted its use outside of this study. As novice researchers the word clouds served as a helpful starting point for data analysis.

3.8 Sample

Six children from culturally diverse backgrounds in the Year 4 class were approached to take part in the study. One child did not take part due to long term absence on medical grounds. Consent and assent were gained from five participants; two were 10 years old and had repeated Year 3 to improve academic performance; three were 9 years old. All five, 3 boys and 2 girls were culturally diverse with at least one parent born outside Germany and languages other than German were spoken at home specifically, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian and Brazilian Portuguese.

The class teacher, a subject teacher, and a teaching assistant were observed, interviewed pre- and post- intervention. The adults were all female, monocultural German, with academic *Gymnasium* educations except for the teacher-research who was educated in England.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Participation and research were both unfamiliar concepts in this setting. Promoting a cause that children have no understanding of for a PAR project is unethical and leads to misinterpretation (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017). Trialing a teaching strategy such as participation requires an informed perspective (Costley et al., 2010). Recognising the appropriateness of the research design on the research topic, along with its importance and its unfamiliarity, the children in the Year 4 class, undertook a preparatory project that focused on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and participation theory prior to the study as a capacity building exercise (Maguire et al., 2018).

This research design is creative, courageous and intended to provide genuine child participation. Understanding that research with children is ethically delicate and wanting

to avoid research tokenism, Cook-Sather (2020) recommends keeping processes and attitudes open-ended and attentive to the participants. Therefore, method consultation, trial and selection were child centered, flexible and voluntary. The focus group roles were voluntary and undertaken with knowledge of proceedings and impact. Alternatives were available throughout and reflection on the process was regular and actionable.

This study acknowledged transparent researcher bias (Brown, 2023) as an ethical consideration and required sensitivity as an insider researcher to maintain productive relationships (Costly, Elliot & Gibbs, 2013). All participants completed the regularly repeated consent and assent process, knowing the study's purpose and how the findings would be disseminated. The interviews were audio recorded with consent from the participants and deleted after transcription. All data was stored under password and deleted on study completion in line with BERA (2018) guidelines.

An important detail of this study is that the participants are addressed as 'children'. Mindful of the vulnerability (Maguire et al. 2018) associated with the reference, this author wishes to encourage political knowledge and democratic empowerment in children (Safir & Dugan, 2021; Cook-Sather, 2020; Lundy, 2018; Bahou, 2011) and build individual and collective identities of present rather than future citizens (Abendschön, 2015). Acknowledging that children can voice opinions and be experts in their own lives (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004) goes some way to repositioning them alongside adults in matters that affect them.

3.10 Data Analysis

The mantra of this study was that children are producers not receivers of knowledge. Finding effective child friendly tools for data analysis was challenging. The quantitative data was visualised in graphs produced by the children, displayed in chapter 4. The descriptive, qualitative, interview data were translated and transcribed, in English and German by Lowry and Kahlo. This collaboration minimized errors and prepared material

for the children to actively participate in data visualisation, producing word clouds of their own transcripts to allow comparison and interpretation of emerging themes. It also acknowledged that quantities of text were inappropriate in this context. Understanding the limitations of word clouds concerning ambiguity, they were used with other tools as removing a single word from a context and using it in isolation may lead to misinterpretation (Ramlo, 2011).

Thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns recurring through the entire data, was undertaken. This supported a contextualist method where the participants make meaning of their own experiences and how they affect social contexts around them (Braun & Clark, 2006). Progressive focusing where analysis is continually modified through pre-ordinate and responsive themes to capture multiple realities, patterns and contradictions were reported and analysed through the theoretical framework. A balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts (Braun & Clark, 2006) mapped out at the 'Our Town' presentation, triangulated the findings and supported legitimisation of a mixed methods, Mosaic approach.

Chapter 4: Data Presentation and Analysis (4093)

4.1 Introduction

The data is presented and analysed by the members of the intergenerational PAR community led by the teacher-researcher as described in chapter 3, through an emerging theoretical framework using recurring themes from the literature review in chapter 2 and the data itself in accordance with the inclusive nature of the PAR methodology. Quantitative and qualitative data collected from observations, semi-structured interviews and a focus group facilitated a convergent mixed methods design (Creswell, 2017) allowing multiple child and adult perspectives and triangulation of opinions (Cohen et al., 2017). Thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns recurring through the entire data (Braun & Clark, 2006) and progressive focusing capture multiple realities, allow extensive interpretation, and is necessary when researching a diverse group. An ideological interpretation to emancipate (Garnett et al., 2019) in keeping with the critical theory paradigm and the PAR methodology of this study aims to illuminate the margins, hear their voices and transform practice.

The framework was designed to respond to the three research questions set out in Chapter 1. The historical norms of working in isolation (Behrmann, 2021) and having no internal, or regional inspection procedures (Röbken, Schütz & Lehmkuhl, 2019), meant pedagogic practice and equality of opportunity outside one's own classroom was an unknown parameter even for this insider researcher (Yip, 2023; Costley, Elliot & Gibbs, 2013). Therefore, the study required a reconnaissance phase that collected quantitative and qualitative data to address the first research question. Four lessons were observed to determine levels of participatory opportunity in core (German and Maths) and non-core (English and Topic) lessons.

Observations were recorded through an ethnographic perspective in field notes and focused on the relationships, actions and interactions of the five culturally diverse children that formed the research sample described in Chapter 3. Quantitative data sets

from the observations and interviews began to address the first research question by establishing patterns of perceived participation in relation to different pedagogic practices in core and non-core subjects. For more detailed qualitative data, talk regarding the complex concepts of voice and agency was encouraged to establish familiarity with the research vocabulary (Harfitt, 2017; Kim, 2017) and pre-intervention perceptions of the two concepts. The process was repeated following the participatory intervention to address research question 2.

This ‘messy,’ non-linear framework prioritized data through participant experience (Garnett et al., 2019). Empirical data from other studies, theory, insider researcher knowledge of the setting and the participants, and a final focus group were contextualized to enrich the data and respond to the final question of systemic change, for equitable, sustainable participation required by the UNCRC (Lundy, 2007).

The findings identified four areas for discussion:

1. Perceptions of pre-intervention participation
2. Power
3. Space and Voice
4. Audience and Influence

4.2 Perception of pre-intervention participation

Research question 1 required reconnaissance to explore meaningful participation prior to a participatory intervention. Observing for a single day offers limited insight however, the evidence collected from post-observation semi-structured interviews provided triangulation to boost trustworthiness.

According to Shier (2001) meaningful participation requires:

1. opportunity for voice (level 1)
2. encouragement of voice (level 2)

3. that is given 'due weight' (level 3)
4. agentic decision making (level 4)
5. responsibility for decisions that affect changes in the class or school (level 5).

In accordance with Article 2 of the UNCRC and crucial to this study, voice and agency through meaningful participation, must be afforded equally to all (Lundy, 2007). The graph below shows that that is not the case in the pre-intervention lessons observed.

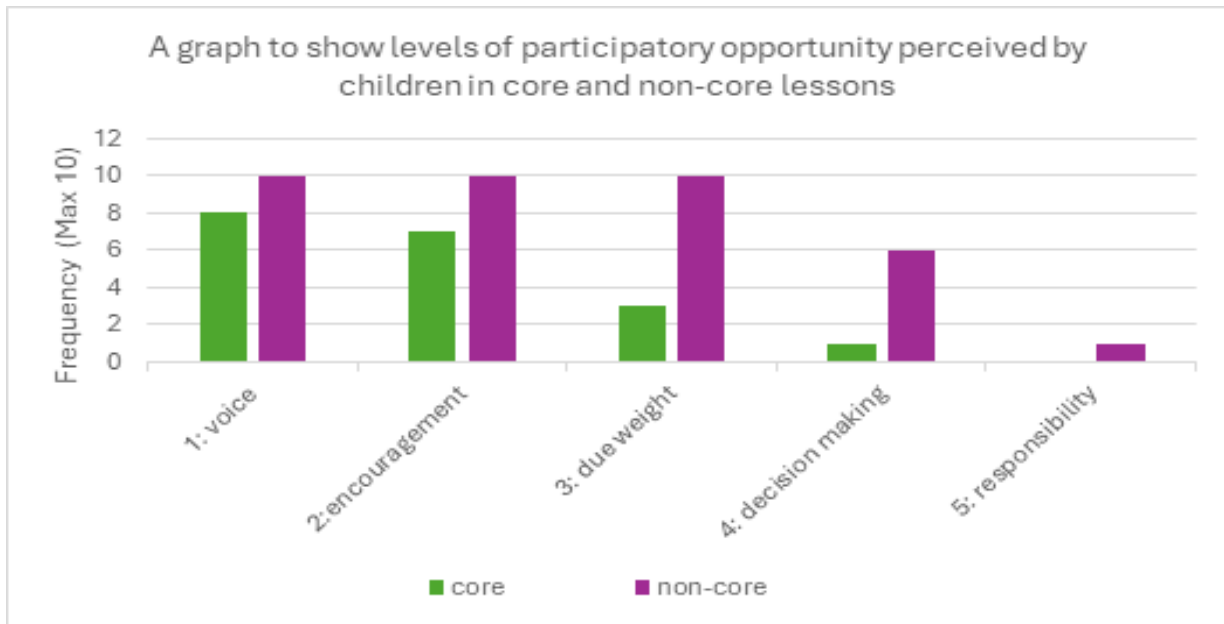


Fig. 1 Pre-intervention levels of participation perceived by culturally diverse children

Prioritising collaboration, the PAR community co-presented the quantitative data in Fig.1 and noted a generalizable difference in perceived participation between core and non-core subjects for this sample in this context, suggesting that non-core subject lesson offered more participatory opportunities than core subject lesson. However, this study focused on individual children's lived experiences, as stated in Chapter 3, and therefore required deeper interpretive analysis of the how and why some lessons recorded wide-ranging levels of participation and others noted more constant perceptions to build on the initial generalizations. The adults facilitating the lessons were asked to state their perceived participation opportunity levels based on their lesson planning to establish

cultural consciousness and targeted support. The children’s secret agent pseudonyms: Red, Black, Blue, Purple and Green, discussed in chapter 3 appear on the graph.

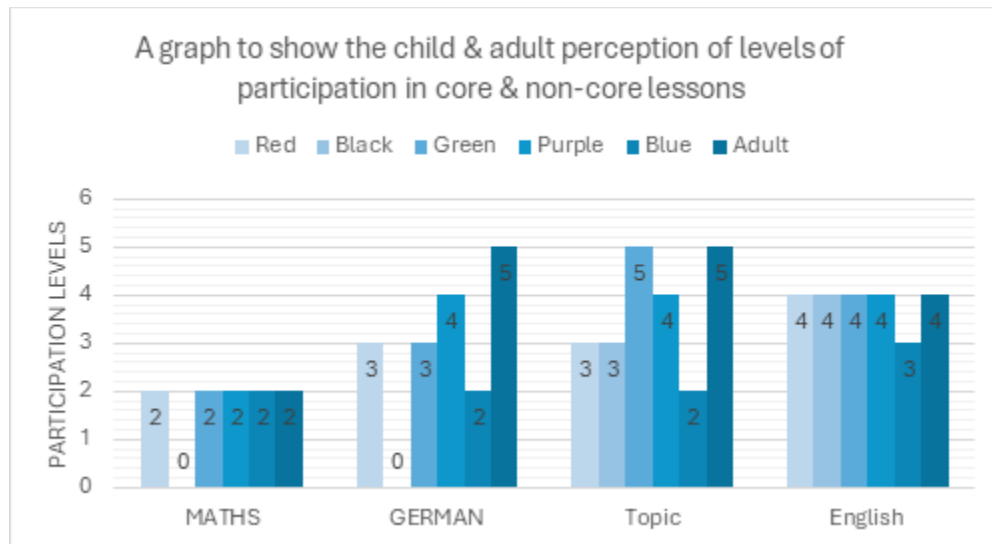


Fig. 2 Pre-intervention levels of participation as perceived by children and adults.

Some lower-level voice-based participatory opportunity is perceived by the children in core subject lessons.

- In both core subjects, Maths and German, 4 out of 5 children perceived that they were listened to (level 1).
- In Maths, 4 out of 5 felt supported or encouraged to share an answer, an idea or an opinion, but only 3 out of 5 felt the same in German.
- In Maths, participation levels 3,4 & 5 were not perceived by any child.
- In German, 3 out of 5 felt their views and ideas were accepted (level 3)
- One child felt part of the decision-making process (level 4).
- No children perceived any opportunity to take responsibility for any decision-making (level 5) in either core subject.

The perception of participation in non-core subject lessons is perceived as higher-level, more agentic, than in core subject lessons.

- All 5 children felt listened to (level 1), supported or encouraged (level 2) and that their views were accepted (level 3) in both Topic and English.
- Four out of 5 saw opportunities to make decisions in the English lesson, as did 2 out of 5 in Topic.

Qualitative data from multiple perspectives of the same situation deepen the inference that realities are individual and highlight the necessity to avoid false homogeneity in cultural studies that perpetuate stereotypes and generalization (Caetano et al. 2020). Reliability and validity of research requires generalizability in the positivist paradigm (Grix, 2002). However, in this critical design, credibility is achieved through interpretation of multiple opinions and cross-referencing child and adult perceptions as Cohen et al. (2017) suggest. Enriching the descriptive quantitative data with interpretive qualitative findings also accentuates surprising or contradictory data.

- Black perceived no participatory opportunities in either core subject, although the planning levels stated level 2 for Maths and level 5 for German.
- Purple found level 4, decision-making opportunities in Topic, English and German lessons (Interview 1, 6.5.24). The plans concurred offering opportunities for both voice and agency.

The data from the German lesson recorded the widest range of perception including Black's zero rating. Lundy (2018) states that non-participation is an acceptable and frequently exhibited right of the child. However, safe and inclusive space (Lundy, 2007) should be standard procedure to facilitate this individual choice, following dialogue to gain an awareness of the reasons for the choice (Wischmann & Riepe's, 2019).

The teachers are referred to using their secret agent pseudonyms: Da vinci, Monet, Kahlo and Lowry, in the interview data. During the teacher interview, Monet reflected that although level 5 participation was planned for, not all children took advantage of the opportunities on offer. No dialogue to establish causation appears in the findings.

“They were all given choices. Half the class were on-task... The usual candidates found reasons not to be productive, today it was password problems, I think.... tomorrow something else...” (Monet - interview)

Several children reflected on the lesson with frustration and suggested a disparity of distribution of resources (Hargreaves, Buchanan & Quick, 2021) including teacher time and technology allocation, implying disengagement and boredom.

“I tried to work together with XXX ... her password worked but she wouldn’t let me read it with her...(sad?)... she said she reads faster than me...not true but whatever. I didn’t know what else to do and the teacher was busy.” (Purple - interview 1)

“I had a whole lesson where I did nothing.... and nobody said anything or even noticed...Boring as usual...” (Blue – interview 1)

Benefitting from a mixed methods design, field notes confirmed no support or scaffolding for this sample and little opportunity for voice, verbal or otherwise, after the opening question and answer session, where questions were “quickly answered by the same monocultural children” (Field notes - 29.4.24)

My personal bias selected the “*usual candidates*” (Monet, 29.4.24) comment for interpretation, questioning how cultural value is perceived in this classroom (Hargreaves, Buchanan & Quick, 2021). A historical norm of the German system identifies that few teachers exhibit social consciousness and inclination to provide targeted support (Behrmann, 2021) for socially or culturally diverse children in lessons. As an insider researcher, I frequently observe this conscious or unconscious deficit behaviour. Empirical data from around the world (Safir & Dugan, 2021; Caetano et al. 2020; Szelei et al.,2019) suggest that deficit thinking marginalises children who become disengaged and misrepresented. Key concepts emerged from the data, even before the participation intervention began.

4.3 Power

In contrast to the German lesson data, the Maths lesson shows consistency of perception at level 2. The English lesson was also consistent at level 4. Hattie's (2023) extensive study states that teachers are key motivators and influencers in their classrooms. In response to the first research question, the findings concerning adult motivation for participatory pedagogy question the method's capacity to deliver high attainment in core subjects.

“I don't have the time, energy or interest in researching different pedagogical methods....I'm too old ...The curriculum is big and detailed for Maths. It is a struggle to complete it. I like a high achieving class and I'm not sure that participation pedagogy is right for those pupils.” (Da Vinci - interview)

This demonstrates teacher agency and understanding that effectiveness often requires trade-offs between educational domains (Biesta, 2015) to meet the external systemic structures. However, it also demonstrates that Freire's (1970) banking system of education remains dominant in this classroom and implies that motivation for inclusive, participatory practice is low.

“I need control in my classroom, not chaos and am happy to go back to frontal, old-fashioned methods when necessary.” (Da Vinci – interview)

Conversely, the non-core English lesson data suggests that pedagogic experimentation to redistribute power play in the classroom may intrinsically motivate and establish connection as the teaching assistant describes.

“I support the children differently in this lesson because the learning response is so different. They finish tasks, they ask questions, and they do it all in English! No stress! I'm learning too... It turns the classroom upside down and gives them all a chance to shine and they do just that.” (Kahlo - interview)

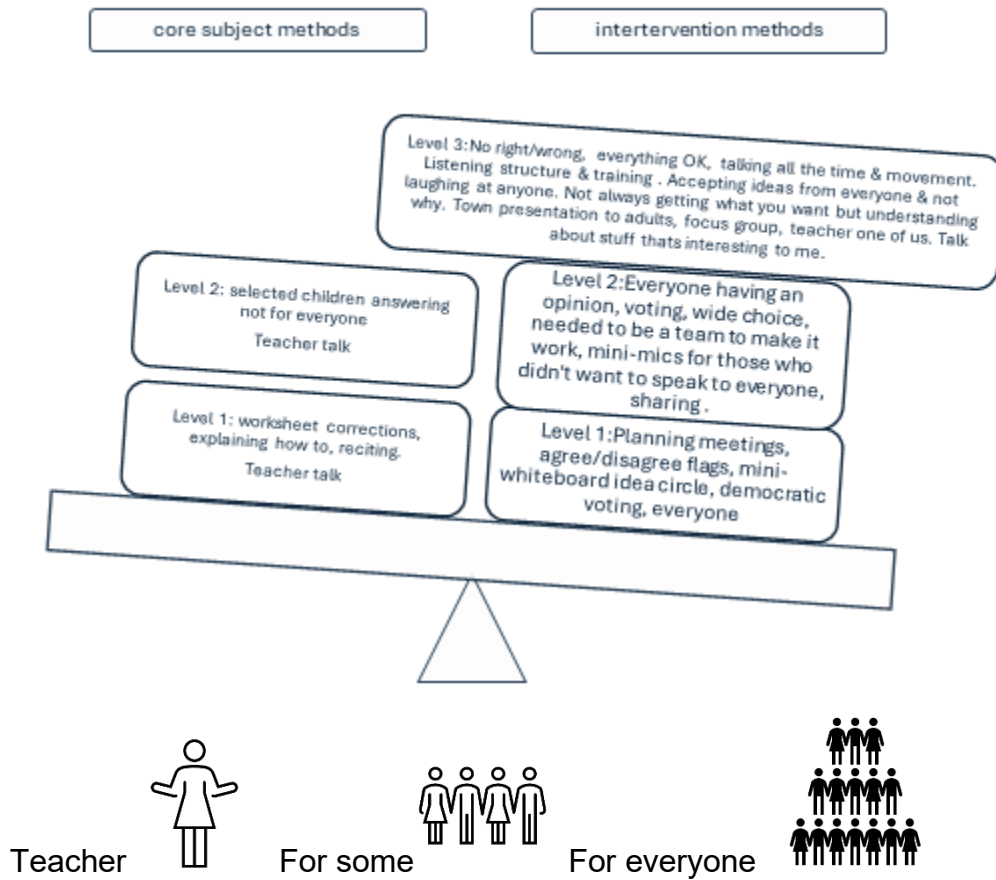


Fig.4 Equality of voice opportunity comparison for core subject and participation intervention teaching and learning methods – Interview data

Although voice is referenced throughout the data, many of the pre-intervention entries show how little it is prioritized as a pedagogic tool and how often it is the teacher’s voice being given ‘due weight’ (Lundy, 2007) rather than the child’s. The interview data supports previous empirical findings of power disparities between peers, where marginalised voices were not heard in favour of quicker, more articulate child voices (McVeety & Farren, 2020).

“(teacher) always picks XXX because he is faster than me. Unfair.” (Red - observation)

“I speak when the teacher asks me, answering questions ... in group work I let the others speak ... they have more to say, its often boring. ” (Black - interview)

These examples suggest that subject hierarchy and power relations are institutionalized structures that may not enable equality of opportunity in high-quality classroom talk. However, post-intervention interview narratives from the same children enriched the data in Fig. 4 commenting positively on voice opportunity and due weight given.

“I didn’t talk at the beginning when we started planning. I didn’t like talking ... not my thing. So they made the rules and I just agreed, like always...But now it’s different. I say what I think and sometimes others like it and we get to do it! I was even elected Class Spokesperson! I like working with Green. She talks a lot! We make a good team.”

(Black - interview)

Interestingly, some participants felt that voice opportunity was a staple part of most lessons, but listening was not. Tokenism (Hart, 1992), not giving due weight to child voice (Lundy, 2018) is heavily debated in the literature, as mentioned in Chapter 2. Having revisited Article 12 of the UNCRC in a reflection session, the concept of space being safe and inclusive (Lundy, 2007) is also questioned in the findings.

“I always talk a lot! We can ask questions, but we are not asked for our opinions...and if, they are ignored, poo-pooed or laughed at ...This project is different because we learned to listen. Everyone listened and thought and then made a plan... together. It was hard!” (Purple - interview)

“ I can talk! But I usually get told off for doing it and who listens anyway?” (Green - interview)

Together we experimented with active listening involving hearing, responding and collaborating around the input from intergenerational dialogue, as highlighted by Graham et al. (2022) and with non-verbal listening described in Clark’s (2001) Mosaic approach. It is widely perceived that active verbal and non-verbal listening practices enable progress in learning and in data collection and having alternative forms create safe space for culturally diverse children to share their knowledge. An adult interview perspective supports these findings.

“I was resisting...I’m old...but they explained how the maths problem could be more clearly explained using their town and... they were right...It was louder but on task and I was able to speak to everyone and enjoyed listening to what they had to say. I’m surprised!” (Da Vinci - interview)

Deep listening structures were used to facilitate the final focus group, build relationships with peers and adults, and challenge the positioning and status of culturally diverse children in this context.

Although voice dominates much of the literature, agency was also investigated in relation to question 2. Exercising agency is an integral part of the PAR methodology and proved problematic for some of the children. Given autonomy with photo elicitation to decide what was a teaching and learning method and how to photograph it was not straight forward and often frustrating.

*“Is this a learning method? Am I learning? Just tell me! (angry) I have no clue.”
(Blue: field notes)*

Acknowledging that agency as a subjective notion is difficult to understand and challenging to quantify, Safir & Dugan’s (2021) Roses and Thorns single point rubric (Appendix D) was used to pinpoint its associated factors. The children were asked to select their three favourite methods from the photographs and discuss whether they allowed them;

1. to feel important (identity);
2. to feel seen and accepted in the classroom (belonging),
3. to show understanding and knowledge (mastery)
4. to make decisions and/or a difference in the classroom or school (efficacy).

Understanding concepts such as agency and practicing reflection requires time and training which were limited in this study. Being the first phase of a participation action

research cyclical design, familiarity of vocabulary and research skills were in their infancy. The ability to reflect on criteria necessary for meaningful participation more deeply and confidently in the study's latter stages was an influencing factor in the trustworthiness of this task and a demonstration of capacity building associated with PAR methodology.

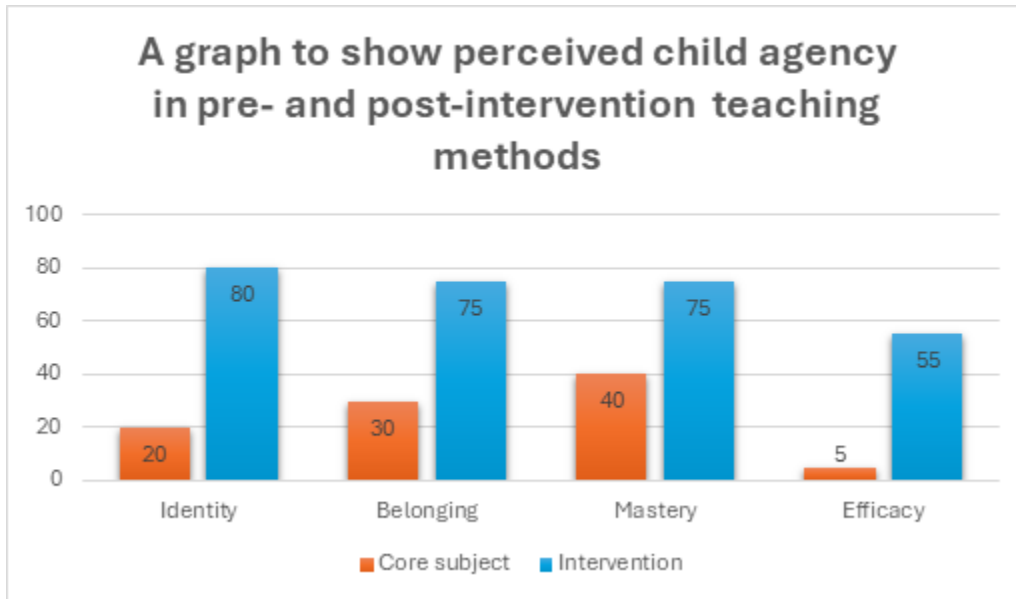


Fig.5 Frequency comparison of perception of agentic factors in teaching methods selected from core subject lessons and the participation intervention – interview data

The data shows marked increases in the perception of agency, with the largest difference, a 60% rise in the perception of matters relating to identity. Combining Article 13 of UNCRC (Lundy, 2007) emphasizing children's rights to freedom of expression, and Rudduck and Flutter's (2004) suggestion that personality, identity and mindset all influence choosing active or passive participation, this data raises awareness of identity and how valuable cultural resources and practices are for diverse learners.

Triangulation to enhance the reliability of this data focused on Red's pre-intervention narrative and how he positioned himself within the classroom.

"I hate reading and writing. I'm special needs. It's boring and I can't do it."

(Red: interview 1)

“Before... I did a presentation about football and I used a photo of the German National team...I’m a Poland fan...but all the others are German.” (Red: interview 1)

The buildings created for the ‘Our Town’ intervention imparted culturally significant information reflecting the identities of the children in the form of art and not the spoken word. The coffee shop was full of Brazilian delicacies; the hotel had the emergency exit signs in English, German and Russian; the library full of bilingual English/ Portuguese books and the lighthouse was painted red and white, *“like the Polish flag” (Red-field notes)*. The post-intervention word cloud included many words relating to cultural identity, such as ‘*Brazilian*’ and ‘*Russian*’, identities widely unknown to the class prior to the project. This implies a lack of interest in funds of knowledge and identity, crucial in de-centralizing mono-culture structures in superdiverse classrooms (Gilde & Volman, 2021).

“The best thing was working with Black. He is also Brazilian. I didn’t know! I never worked with him before but then we laughed about all the Brazilian cakes we knew and worked together, translating the book titles for the library” (Green: field notes)

Mirroring Scott Lewis’ (2018) experiment on teaching and learning, this intervention approach provided unseen opportunities to address different experiences in and outside the classroom. This project allowed multiple perspectives on a variety of topics, some more sensitive than others, resulting in rich discussion full of alternative views.

“I would like to build a wind farm for the town...but not close to the school. Shall I put it in the sea? Past the lighthouse?” (Green: intervention field notes)

“My Russia is bad at the moment. It is important that we listen and understand...if not, how can we stop them?” (Purple: intervention field notes)

This experience was contrary to much of the empirical data that highlights young children as not having the capacity and maturity to form opinions (Lundy, 2018). While identity is a fluid concept (Compton-Lilly, 2006), race and nationality are constructs that affect identities daily in significant ways, for adults and for children. This illuminates how pedagogy can affect participation and how participation affects voice, identity and belonging. This exercise in perception of child agency responding to research question 2, builds on the literature that calls for courage to challenge negative assumptions and institutionalized structures that legitimize them, mirroring my own critical values.

4.5 Audience and Influence

The research design, sample size and child:adult ratio allowed effective audience throughout the study, increasing the levels of 'due weight' (Lundy, 2007) given especially within the smaller sub-group sessions, detailed in chapter 3. Regarding the dissemination of the findings, audience had also been discussed and agreed during the pre-project training. In line with the Mosaic approach, the different data collection methods were displayed and continuously updated, mapping out patterns and contradictions (Clark, 2001) in preparation for the focus group and the final research question. Simultaneously, the PAR community organised walking tours to display the English vocabulary and conversation skills learned during the 'Our Town' unit. The children invited their parents to an after-school event. Acting as 1:1 tour guides, acknowledging the shared standards for self and peer assessment, this created an authentic way to share knowledge and exhibit high-quality academic work. Making learning public (Safir & Dugan, 2021) through relationships with the wider community offered opportunity for voice and agency to everyone on a scale that a single teacher could not provide.

Disappointingly, none of the research samples' parents could attend for reasons beyond the scope of this study but provides thought for future investigation. Reflecting on this

disappointment, a variety of stakeholders with the power to make decisions suggested by Lundy (2007) were also invited to view the town and read the research findings. Two members of the leadership team and the local mayor attended and had a surprising effect on Red's identity, concurring with the literature.

“ I presented the town to the mayor! He is also Polish! His English was rubbish so I presented everything in English..for my grade...which was really good! (very happy), then German, then Polish...he helped me a bit with a few Polish words...Everyone said how great I was ... but I was so tired!”

(Red: post-intervention interview)

“We were supposed to speak English for as long as we could. So I presented every corner of the town to (Headteacher) and then she started asking me questions! In English! (laughing)... In the fishbowl I asked her questions! It was very cool!”

(Purple: field notes)

In response to the final research question, a fishbowl focus group was arranged for the PAR community and two members of the leadership team. Influence was demonstrated in varying degrees. The first round of the focus group was preceded by Green presenting the expectations for practices and outcomes of the meeting and Black including a succinct description of verbal and non-verbal listening skills that should be adhered to. Genuine respect for all members of the PAR community was shown, allowing the children safe space to share their two proposed areas of development for discussion.

1. Slow down & listen
2. Regular PAR projects

The first proposal was accepted and a plan of action involving the children as teachers was produced. The second required further discussion, but ideas were shared and as this research sample were all leaving to go to secondary school, a new team with the teacher-

researcher at its lead, will be granted off-timetable provision for the next planning stage of this cyclical action research project.

4.6 Conclusion

By showing capacity to exercise voice and agency the culturally diverse children gained insight into democratic processes, awareness of their rights and associated inequalities, and felt empowered to celebrate their identities to a range of audiences. A surprising finding concerns collective participation facilitating increased consciousness and flattening hierarchical power relations (Garnett et al., 2019). Understanding that space and voice, audience and influence can only be realised through mutual and inclusive respect, trust and collaboration (Plate & Peacock, 2021), considerable effort on the part of the adults involved to rebalance the classroom culture implies positive and welcome possibilities for sustainable participation.

“I would like to enlarge Fig.4 for my classroom...to remind me to reflect.”

(Da Vinci-field notes)

“It really is a different learning culture and a much better fit for many Louder, yes, busy, active ... less instruction from the front... It produces challenges for all the children in surprising ways...Wonderful. “ (Kahlo-field notes)

Chapter 5: Conclusions and implications (948)

5.1 Introduction

This small-scale investigation explored participatory pedagogy and its impact on culturally diverse children in a German primary school. The children and their teachers were given space to state their classroom perceptions, pre- and post- intervention to reflect on advantageous aspects of meaningful participation and respond to the research questions. Whilst accepting this pedagogical practice as neither a traditional nor natural choice for some, when earnestly applied it encouraged cultural consciousness, confidence, ownership and critical reflection of learning. This chapter identifies themes emerging from the data; proposes personal and collective possibilities for change; limitations of the study and areas for future research.

5.2 Pedagogical choice

In response to research question 1, culturally diverse children experienced pre-intervention participation differently in core and non-core subjects. Strategies for voice were apparent throughout but the question of 'due weight' to avoid tokenism varied. Agency through decision-making and power-sharing responsibilities were more evident in non-core subjects but rare, nonetheless. It may be argued that this was predictable given the German literature noting that dominant culture teachers and parents (Apple & Debs, 2021) believe the selective education system that openly involves institutionalized discrimination against culturally diverse children (Hüpping & Bükler, 2014) to be just. In addition, a lack of mandatory professional development (Plate & Peacock, 2021) and inspection procedures (Röbken et al., 2019) remove any challenge to historical, fixed-ability thinking.

Consequently, a key recommendation would be to develop a collaborative, open-door policy and build learning communities among the adults to regularly conduct small lesson-based inquiries, promoting the teacher as the learner rather than the expert (Plate & Peacock, 2021). Supporting this could encourage pedagogic experimentation with shared accountability and disseminating the findings to the whole staff may

establish reflective processes that provide deeper understanding of the children and tackle the consequences of classroom practice.

5.3 Inclusive participation

Data generated in response to research question 2 has shown that meaningful participation is advantageous to culturally diverse children in several ways. Effective pupil voice strategies enable teachers to gain deep understanding of teaching and learning processes and the way they think about all pupils and their learning (Flutter (2007). The participation intervention provided space for every voice and meant that the children had time to formulate responses, selecting methods and language best suited to make their views known and demonstrate their understanding. Funds of knowledge and identity were shared through conversations, learning activities and incidental comments. Furthermore, interest in emerging identities offered connections to realities outside the classroom (Safir & Dugan, 2021) and aided group reflection on how multiple perspectives can generate multiple solutions – a difficult concept for young children to master. Consequently, asking for help from unexpected sources was also noted and showed a sense of belonging, where work and opinions were valued and often inspired the rest of the class. Gradually, this led to a status transformation, challenging previous deficit perceptions (Neuenschwander et al., 2021) that supported ‘othering’ or colour-blindness (Szelei et al., 2019) of these marginalised individuals. Motivation, dialogue, and commitment to the project were made clear to all during the walking tour presentation of the ‘Our Town’ project. As a project-based learning performance assessment it allowed a public demonstration of knowledge that boosted self-esteem.

Further recommendations would therefore focus on the development of student identity activities and artefacts (Gilde & Volman, 2021) as standard practice to flip the classrooms to become learner-centered rather than teacher led (Schweisfurth, 2015). Done properly, this would allow cultural diversity to be presented, and critically discussed by child experts rather than adult authored textbooks (Safir & Dugan, 2021). It may also encourage collective reflection on how different perspectives connect to the

curriculum, pedagogy development and assessment and through experimentation allow learning communities to build repertoires (Ladson-Billings, 2021) that reach all children (Schweisfurth, 2015).

5.4 Sustainable participation

The final research question enquired how the positive factors listed above can shape school policy to facilitate meaningful participation for culturally diverse children. Although, the focus group data proposal of deep listening training to counter tokenism was readily accepted as actionable, showing audience and influence. Sustaining this practice however requires ongoing impetus, guidance, and expertise from adults (Flutter & Ruddock, 2004). Feedback during the 'Our Town' presentation tours from children, parents, teachers, and local officials was overwhelmingly positive, illuminating the benefits of participation through evidence. However, to convince those who are currently resistant to a human rights approach (Lundy, 2007), awareness of how it impacts the margins must be accompanied by reflection and training. Providing concrete examples of how to introduce participation ethically and effectively whilst considering subject specifications (Neuenschwander et al., 2021), its legally binding status, and moral necessity is challenging (Plate & Peacock, 2021).

The final recommendations would be to use the learning community findings to publicly demonstrate learning and research regularly to the wider community. This could provide space for children, and teachers to be valued as lifelong learners, transforming learning attitudes, developing new practices, and sharing expertise (Plate & Peacock, 2021).

5.5 Limitations and further research

A mixed method design invited large quantities of data in both German and in English, and following the first observation, every moment was a data gathering opportunity. During analysis the recurring themes were clustered, leaving a quantity of interesting

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data consigned to the field notes. In hindsight, using a research partner or saving this topic for a deeper PhD project with a larger wordcount may have improved this situation.

The disappointment felt by the sample children when their parents did not attend the presentation tour was palpable. For this reason, further study is required to gain perceptions from the parents of the marginalised children to understand and extend meaningful participation to the whole community.

Postscript: Narrative Critical Reflection (491)

The reflection grid (Appendix L) outlines targets, thoughts, feelings and feedback generated whilst working on this dissertation. Reflections on the inequalities experienced and their consequences dominate the four sections of the grid and therefore will be discussed in detail here.

Having taught in a range of educational contexts in five different countries, blatant bias and disparity against cultural diversity in this context was shocking. Extensive reading and literature reviews to increase knowledge and understanding of the topic led to further disbelief as it highlighted the disparity and bias as common but any action to transform it over the last three decades seemed nonexistent. I have been in my present position for six years and studying for this masters degree has empowered me to finally ask the question: what is our equity imperative? What really matters here? And have the confidence to question historical norms and provide a new way forward based on evidence gained inside and outside the context.

The consequences of this restrictive learning cultural affected the data collection. The initial quietness of the children eventually turned into a buzz of ideas when the teams were clear that all ideas would be listened to and discussed and that there could be no wrong answers. Reflecting on this consequence of behaviourist education strengthened my resolve to bring about sustainable change.

Understanding through the module material, that criticality, democracy, and emancipation are part of my ontology and epistemology, my dissertation provided a professional opportunity to increase consciousness to make things better for the sample children. Critical analysis and evaluation of empirical data from around the world helped to develop my understanding of education in super diverse classrooms and my ideas regarding appropriate methodologies to best address the sensitivities involved. Through reflection I realised the children had to be firmly at the center of the process to make it meaningful.

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Participatory action research was discussed at length with my tutor. Exploring case study through a critical ethnographic lens and other methodological paths increased my understanding of research but this study needed to be more than an interpretive fact-finding dissertation. Collective thinking through parity of voice and deep listening demanded in a PAR design, motivated children and adults to dissolve historical hierarchy in the class. This was perhaps due to researcher bias. As an insider, minority teacher earnestly supported by a teaching assistant (TA), both positions perceived and remunerated as less-than a dominate culture teacher, leveling hierarchies was a transparent factor in this critical study.

The messy design and range of data from children, adults, quantitative and qualitative was difficult to manage and the structure of the dissertation was questioned in the draft chapter feedback. Reading and reflecting on several ORO exemplars helped find order and sequence in the dissertation's presentation.

I thoroughly enjoyed the research process and through this study will take the lead on sustaining meaningful participation for culturally diverse children in this school and in others.

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Appendix A: Research Schedule

Date	Activity
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of introduction • Completion of draft literature review: participation and agency links to culturally diverse learners. • Phase 1 begins: Three dates will be allocated for participant observation beginning 29.4.24. Three of the six participants will be observed during a core and a noncore subject lesson with the class teacher. Type up fieldnotes. • Completion of draft research design chapter • Update PDP • Organise data: thematic colour codes
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The semi-structured interviews with those observed on 29.4 will take place between 2.5 & 8.5. The timescale is important to allow retention of information as well as reflection. • Participation observations with the remaining three children will take place on 6.5.24. In case of absenteeism 13.5.24 is also available. Type up fieldnotes. • The semi-structured interviews with those observed on 6.5 will take place between 8.5 & 15.5.24 • Organise data: thematic colour codes • Review ethical protocols
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 2 begins: Participation Intervention observations 3.6.24 • Semi-structured interviews • Organise data: thematic colour codes • Phase 3: Focus Group 14.6.24 • Data presentation work of quantitative data
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data analysis work of qualitative data • Draft data presentation and analysis chapter • PDP update • Re-drafting reviewed chapter
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Ethical Appraisal Form • Check Reference List • Write abstract
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5.9.24 SUBMIT

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview – child

Please circle: Core subject Noncore subject Participation Intervention

Levels of Participation	By whom?	Which activity?	How did it make you feel? (Emoji?)	Did it help you learn? Why /why not?
1. Were you listened to?				
2. Were you encouraged/ supported to share your views?				
3. Were your views accepted?				
	Yes	No		
4. Did you make decisions on how to learn in the lesson?				
5. Did you share the power and responsibility of making decisions in the lesson?				

Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview – Adult

Please circle:

Core Subject

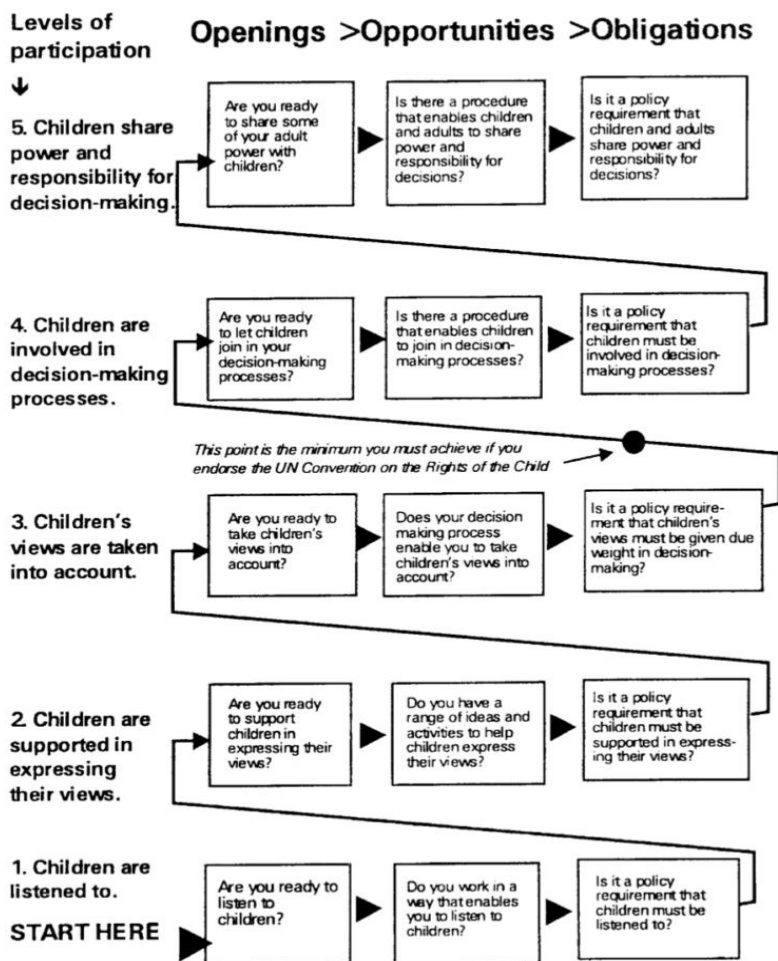
Noncore Subject

Participation Intervention

Use a highlighter to mark levels of participation in various activities in today’s lesson

Reflect on how you felt during each activity

Reflect on the teaching and learning taking place



Appendix D: Roses & Thorns (Adapted from Safir & Dugan, 2021)

Roses	AGENCY	Thorns
What is something that went well in this area?		What got in the way or was hard for you in this area?
	Identity: This made me feel important.	
	Mastery: Here I demonstrated my learning and understanding.	
	Belonging: I felt seen and liked in my classroom.	
	Efficacy: I had an opportunity to make a difference in class or in school	

Put the **photographs** in the appropriate places to show which activities gave you roses and which gave you thorns. Tell me why....

Interview prompts: AGENCY

- Did this lesson help you feel smart? Why? Why not?
- When was the last time you came up with your own idea in this class? How did it feel?
- What's your favourite way to show what you know?
- Do you like coming to class?
- Do you feel liked by your teacher and peers?
- If you had a magic wand to make something different, what would it be?
- What questions should I be asking?
- What should I be observing in our next observation?

Appendix E: Observation checklist - quantitative

	3	6	9	12	15	18	21
Teacher Talk							
Listened to							
Encouraged to speak							
Views accepted							
Part of decision making							
Responsibility for decision making							

Appendix F : Consent and Assent Form

ECYS/WELS

E822 INTERVIEWS CONSENT AND ASSENT FORM

(to be completed by all participants and, if the participant is a child/young person under age 18, with and by their parent/carer/guardian)

If this request relates to a child/young person under the age of 18 and a child or young person would benefit from this, please would a parent, carer or guardian read these questions to them and, if necessary, complete the replies for them.

Please indicate YES or NO for each of the questions below and return the completed form by 29.4.24 to Fleur Richardson at [REDACTED]

Have you read (or had read to you) the information about this interview?	YES	NO
Has someone explained this interview to you?	YES	NO
Do you understand what this interview is about?	YES	NO
Have you asked all the questions you want?	YES	NO
Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand?	YES	NO
Do you understand it is OK to stop taking part at any time?	YES	NO
Will you have an adult present with you?		YES
NO		
Are you happy for the interview to be audio recorded?	YES	NO
Are you happy with how your data will be stored?	YES	NO
Do you understand that your and any other real names as well as any identifiable information will be removed from what will be shared after the interview?	YES	NO
Are you happy to take part?		YES
NO		

If any answers are 'no' you can ask more questions. But if you **don't** want to take part, please let me know and **don't** sign your name.

If you **do** want to take part, please write your name and today's date

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Your name _____

Date _____

If the person to be interviewed is a child or young person under 18 and you are happy for the child or young person you are responsible for (as their parent, carer or guardian) to participate, please could you also sign and date below.

Print name _____

Sign _____

Date _____

Return form to Fleur Richardson

Thank you for your help.

Appendix G: Interview Letter - children

E822 Information letter for children and young people (pre-18): Interviews

What is the aim of this interview?

The aim of the interview is to gain your view on different types of learning methods.

Who is conducting the research and who is it for?

This interview is part of my studies on a masters-level course at The Open University in which I am carrying out a small-scale investigation. I am using a range of ways of collecting information to answer the following question which learning methods help you to learn and to show what you have learned. This is aimed to help me better understand and develop approaches to lessons and open up new ways of learning and to share my findings with others for whom the findings will be relevant to changing practice.

Why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been chosen because your views would be valuable in answering the question set for the study and I hoped you might be prepared to talk to me about your experiences and opinions.

If I take part in this research, what will be involved?

The interview should take no more than 30 minutes and I will make sure that I have checked with your parents that when and where we talk is the most convenient for you and them. Our conversation may be recorded if you agree and I will make notes about what you say. Permission has been given by the headteacher of the school for me to invite you to this interview. I would like to ask your consent to make an audio recording of our discussion so that I can refer back to what was said more accurately than would be possible just from my notes. If you do not wish to be audio recorded, I will accept your wish, and rely only on my written notes. Only I will have access to the audio recording. I do not need to share this with those at the University or in this practice setting. In any part of the interview which will be shared with my tutor or form part of the final dissertation report you and anyone else you name during our discussion will be referred to by a false name (pseudonym) and you will be asked if you would like to suggest what name I use.

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What will we be talking about?

In the interview I will ask you questions about what you think about: different learning activities that you have done, how they make you feel and help you learn. I can share the questions with you in advance, if you would like to see them.

Will what I say be kept private?

Your participation will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018). No personal information about you, such as contained in your consent forms, will be shared more widely. In the case of the audio recording and my notes of the interview, these will be kept private only to me and typed up as soon as possible. However, if you let me know anything during your interview which I consider means that you might be unsafe or have been involved in a criminal act, because this is a safeguarding concern, I will need to pass this information immediately to the organisation's Designated Safeguarding Officer. When I make anonymised records of the interview, as outlined above, these will be stored securely on password protected on an external hard drive and the original notes and recording will then be destroyed. I can confirm that neither you as an individual nor the setting will be identifiable in my submissions to the University or any presentations I make of my findings to interested audiences.

What happens now?

After reading this information sheet with your parent/carer, please read and complete the consent form. This means that you and your parent/carer sign your and their names and the date to say you are all happy for me to set up a time and place for the interview. Whether you agree or not is entirely up to you and your parent/carer, as the invitation is for you to take part voluntarily. You can change your mind later and withdraw from the study by letting me know and I will destroy the information (consent forms and interview files) I have created. This will be possible up until the time I am using your information as part of my assessment 9th September 2024.

What if I have other questions?

If you have any questions about the study, I would be very happy to answer them. Please contact me at [REDACTED]

Appendix H: Interview Letter - adult

E822 Information letter for adults (aged over 18): Interviews

What is the aim of this interview?

The aim of the interview is to gain an individual's perspective on an aspect of education, childhood and youth studies as part of a small-scale investigation for a Masters qualification designed to contribute to knowledge and practice in my chosen area of specialism. This particular interview is designed to help answer how and why participatory pedagogy impacts agency in culturally diverse learners.

Who is conducting the research and who is it for?

This interview is part of my studies on the Open University Masters module E822 'Multi-disciplinary dissertation: Education, Childhood and Youth'. On this module I have an opportunity to design a small-scale investigation which will generate findings relevant to and of value to practice settings. The interview has been agreed with my tutor to be an important part of this design to allow me to include the perspectives of selected participants in addressing the above research question. I will be analysing the data collected and reporting my findings in the dissertation I submit to the University as my final assessment for my Masters qualification.

Why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been chosen as your experiences and opinions would be highly valuable in helping to address a question which is considered one which will have value for your setting and others like it.

If I take part in this research, what will be involved?

The interview is intended to last no longer than 20 minutes and a place which I will negotiate with you and others in the setting to be mutually convenient. If there is anyone else affected by the interview, such as a member of staff, they will also have been consulted about when would be a convenient time and permission has been granted from [REDACTED], Headteacher. I would like to ask your consent to make an audio recording of our discussion so that I can refer back to what was said more accurately than would be possible just from my notes. If you do not wish to be audio recorded, I will accept your wish, and rely only on my written notes. Only I will have access to the audio recording. I do not need to share this with those at the University or in this practice setting. I will transcribe and anonymise the interview before sharing any part of this with my tutor or it form part of the final dissertation. Your contribution will be recognised by a pseudonym and you will be asked if you would like to suggest what name should be used. Any other real names referred to during the interview will be removed and renamed.

What will we be talking about?

The focus of the interview will be to find out your perspective on how we can adopt participatory pedagogy and how it impacts teaching and learning. I can share the questions with you in advance, if you would like.

Will what I say be kept confidential?

Your participation will be treated in **strict confidence** in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018). No personal information will be passed from me to anyone else. Your consent forms will be stored safely in our professional setting as agreed with the senior leader overseeing the safe conduct of this research. In the case of the audio recording and my notes of the interview, these will be kept confidential and typed up as soon as possible. However, if you disclose anything during your interview which I consider means that you might be unsafe or have been involved in a criminal act, because this is a safeguarding concern, I will need to pass this immediately to the organizational Designated Safeguarding Officer. The anonymised records of the interview will be stored securely on password protected devices and the original notes and

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recording will then be destroyed. I will be submitting an analysis of the data collected from the interviews as part of my dissertation submitted as the end-of-module assessment. I also plan to present my findings to relevant audiences. I can confirm that neither you as an individual nor the setting will be identifiable in any of these reports and presentations.

What happens now?

After reading this information sheet, please review and complete the consent form. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw your consent at any point up by letting me know, until the time I am using your data in my University assessments. As soon as you let me know you wish to withdraw, your consent forms and any data collected will be destroyed.

What if I have other questions?

If you have any other questions about the study I would be very happy to answer them. Please contact me at [REDACTED]

Appendix I:

 **E822 Ethical Appraisal Form**

Masters: Education, Childhood and Youth

NB: it should be noted that The Open University is unable to offer liability insurance to cover any negative consequences students might encounter when undertaking ‘in-person’ data collection. It is therefore very important that you follow appropriate research protocols which should include seeking Gatekeeper permissions to undertake any data collection within your setting and adhering to ethical principles for the safety of yourself and your participants.

Fill in section 1 of this document with your personal details and brief information about your research. For section 2, please assess your research using the following questions and click yes or no as appropriate. If there is any possibility of significant risk please tick yes. Even if your list contains all “no” you should still return your completed checklist so your tutor/supervisor can assess the proposed research.

Section 1: Project details		
a.	Student name	Fleur Richardson
b.	PI	██████████
c.	Project title	Make it meaningful: a mixed methods investigation exploring participation and how it impacts voice and agency in culturally diverse children.
d.	Supervisor/tutor	Dr Adele Creer
e.	Qualification	Masters in Education
		Masters in Childhood and Youth

f.	MA pathway (where applicable)	Teaching & Learning
g.	Intended start date for fieldwork	29.04.24
h.	Intended end date for fieldwork	14.06.24
i.	Country fieldwork will be conducted in <i>If you are resident in the UK and will be conducting your research abroad please check www.fco.gov.uk for advice on travel.</i>	Germany

Section 2: Ethics Assessment		Yes
1	Does your proposed research need initial clearance from a 'gatekeeper' (e.g. Local Authority, head teacher, college head, nursery/playgroup manager)?	x
2	Have you checked whether the organisation requires you to undertake a 'police check' or appropriate level of 'disclosure' before carrying out your research? ¹	x
3	Have you indicated how informed consent will be obtained from your participants (including children less than 16 years old, school pupils and immediate family members)? Your consent letters/forms must inform participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. ²	x
4	Will your proposed research design mean that it will be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent at the time (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)? If so, have you specified appropriate debriefing procedures? ³	N/A

5	Does your proposed design involve repetitive observation of participants, (i.e. more than twice over a period of more than 2-3 weeks)? Is this necessary? If it is, have you made appropriate provision for participants to renew consent or withdraw from the study half-way through? ⁴	N/ A
6	Are you proposing to collect video and/or audio data? If so, have you indicated how you will protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality and how you will store the data?	x
7	Does your proposal indicate how you will give your participants the opportunity to access the outcomes of your research (including audio/visual materials) after they have provided data?	x
8	Have you built in time for a pilot study to make sure that any task materials you propose to use are age appropriate and that they are unlikely to cause offence to any of your participants?	x
9	Is your research likely to involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. adult/child relationships, peer relationships, discussions about personal teaching styles, ability levels of individual children and/or adults)? What safeguards have you put in place to protect participants' confidentiality?	N/ A
10	Does your proposed research raise any issues of personal safety for yourself or other persons involved in the project? Do you need to carry out a 'risk analysis' and/or discuss this with teachers, parents and other adults involved in the research?	
11	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	
12	Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS or the use of NHS data?	

If you answered 'yes' to questions **12**, you will also have to submit an application to an appropriate National Research Ethics Service ethics committee (<https://www.hra.nhs.uk/about-us/committees-and-services/res-and-recs/>).

Appendix J: Observation Letter - children

E822 Information Letter for Participants (and parents/carers/guardians if aged under 18): Observations

I, Fleur Richardson, would like to observe an activity led by ██████████, 29.4.24 . I am studying for a Masters in Education with the Open University, and this observation is part of my studies.

What is the aim and focus of this observation?

The aim of the observation is to gain a perspective on the activities taking place in ██████. This is to focus on an aspect of education, childhood and youth studies as part of a small-scale investigation for a Masters qualification. The investigation is designed to contribute to knowledge and practice in my chosen area of specialism and the data collected from this observation is designed to help answer how and why participatory pedagogy impacts agency in culturally diverse learners.

Who is conducting the research and who is it for?

This interview is part of my studies on the Open University Masters module E822 'Multi-disciplinary dissertation: Education, Childhood and Youth'. On this module I have an opportunity to design a small-scale investigation which will generate findings relevant to and of value to practice settings.

Why am I being invited to participate in this research?

Your child has been invited because they will be present at the activity which has been chosen to be observed on 29.4.24 at ██████. The observation has been agreed with my tutor to be an important part of my small-scale investigation's design and outline permission has been granted from senior leadership ██████████ and the adult leading the activity to be observed.

If I take part in this research, what will be involved?

The observation will last for approximately 25 minutes at the time and place indicated above is one which has been negotiated as convenient to those in the setting. I will be sitting at the back of the space or be invited to be present, but not participate, in an online teaching environment and will take notes about the activity. For those involved it will therefore not change the activity. If you are reading this as a parent/carer/guardian, please explain this information to your child, if they are below the age of 18. A withdrawal of consent/assent form has been provided, for which only participants (and parent/carers where relevant) who do NOT wish for their child/young person to be included in the observation, are asked to complete and return. If you are happy with all the questions asked on the withdrawal form and would answer YES, there is no need to return the form. If you want to notify us of your desire to withdraw from the observation, please return the form by 29.4.24. This will allow the

activity leader and I to adapt the observation to accommodate your wishes. Information will be collected on an observation schedule.

Will the data collected at the observation remain confidential?

Your participation will be treated in **strict confidence** in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018). No personal information will be shared with anyone else. I will type up my observation schedule notes as soon as practical in a way in which all identifiable features will be removed. The original handwritten notes will be destroyed and the anonymised digital files stored on password protected devices. I may share the anonymised files with my personal tutor. I will be submitting an analysis of the data collected from the observations as part of my dissertation submitted as the end-of-module assessment. I also plan to present my findings to relevant audiences. I can confirm that neither you as an individual nor the setting will be identifiable in any of these reports and presentations.

What happens now?

If you require more information about this observation, or do not want you/your child or young person to take part in the observation of this activity, please contact me on [REDACTED]

After reading this information sheet, please review and decide whether you want to complete and return the withdrawal of consent/assent form. Your child's participation is entirely voluntary.

It will not be possible to withdraw after the observation has started, although the activity leader has the opportunity to withdraw the record of the observation completely for up to a week after the observation and, in this case, all data collected during the observation would then be destroyed.

Appendix K: Consent and assent form - observation

ECYS/WELS

E822 OBSERVATIONS CONSENT FORM FOR SETTING

Please indicate YES or NO for each of the questions below:

Have you read the information about the planned observation?	YES	NO
Has the nature and aims of this observation been explained to you?	YES	NO
Do you understand what this observation will involve?	YES	NO
Do you understand how data will be collected about you from the observation?	YES	NO
Are you happy with how your data will be stored?	YES	NO
Have you asked all the questions you want?	YES	NO
Have you had your questions sufficiently answered?	YES	NO
Do you understand that you can withdraw your consent up to a week after the observation?	YES	NO
Are you happy to take part in the observation?	YES	NO

If any answers are 'no' feel free to ask for further information. However, if you **don't** want to take part, please just let the researcher know (as soon as practical) and **don't** sign your name.

If you consent to participate, please write your name and today's date. You can withdraw consent up until the week after the observation by letting me know.

Your name _____

Date _____

The researcher who will conduct the observation, to sign below:

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Print name _____

Sign _____

Date _____

Return form to Fleur Richardson

Thank you for your help.

Appendix L: Reflection Grid

Category	Feedback received, target achieved, area of development	How did this shape your dissertation?
<p>Knowledge & understanding Targets, reflections / feedback relating to knowledge of current debate & issues in your specific area of focus, drawing out concepts & themes; choosing area of focus; identifying & overcoming ethical issues.</p>	<p>Tutor TMA 02 feedback: Foucault may be of interest r.e. power disparity</p>	<p>Further reading: Power was a key finding that produced the first light bulb moment for the community, thereafter its equally was regularly examined and discussed</p>
	<p>Tutor feedback: ch.4 draft Mention the Mosaic approach earlier and in more detail</p>	<p>The mosaic approach ran strongly throughout the whole study. The children were inspired by its range of methods that centered around them.</p>
	<p>Tutor feedback: ch.3 draft PAR with children is rife with ethical considerations</p>	<p>Revisit BERA & other literature specific to child researchers. Cultural ethical considerations too, not only interesting for the study but also for everyday practice.</p>
	<p>Tutor TMA 02 feedback: AR requires careful planning due to time restriction of the SSI.</p>	<p>Deciding to do one full cycle to inform future plans for a second at a later date.</p>
	<p>Area of development: Deep understanding of culturally diverse learner needs and pedagogies</p>	<p>Turned my rage at clear inequalities into researching different solutions to challenge the issue professionally rather than simply rant – reason for using critical paradigm</p>
<p>Critical analysis & evaluation</p>	<p>1:1 Tutorial Feedback:</p>	<p>Discussion to establish that the rationale demanded transformation & that the</p>

<p>Relating to justifying or challenging your personal perspective; interpreting & critically analysing evidence & methodologies from your own & others research analysing & evaluating themes & issues; sourcing & critically reviewing a wide range of publications; creating an academic argument using synthesis; comparing & connecting practice & theory.</p>	<p>Study lends itself to case study design in the interpretivist paradigm</p>	<p>study provided rare opportunity to highlight hidden curriculum inequalities, officially and professionally.</p>
	<p>Self reflection: Very ambitious framework; lots of methods and perspectives – its a SMALL scale investigation.</p>	<p>Structure was ‘messy’ & difficult to clearly describe, analyse & interpret in 12000: selection was required on findings breadth & depth.</p>
	<p>Self reflection: The focus on cultural diversity had little mention in the teaching & learning strand – voice & agency were well covered.</p>	<p>Extra reading required. German perspective made depressing reading – and was diminutive.</p>
	<p>EE831 EMA feedback: Wide range of reading - could have been more selective with the literature in order to develop deeper critical analysis.</p>	<p>Developed a literature table to streamline relevance, considering topic, setting, date, paradigm and methodology. Helped to form research questions too.</p>
<p>Links to professional practice Relating to designing / applying research methods; developing ideas from previous research / frameworks; reflecting & making adaptations during research & writing process; addressing problems in research design; identifying implications for practice and professional debate; challenging own</p>	<p>Tutor TMA 02 feedback: Why action research? Wouldn't case study be better?</p>	<p>Felt frustrated rage at blatant ‘othering’ / colour blindness & active bias seen. As a minority teacher it was personal & for the parents it was awful. The TA also commented on inequalities experienced. The emotion of the topic was often difficult to separate from the research. However, AR allowed this energy to be channeled professional to</p>

<p>assumptions; managing workload & personal motivation.</p>		<p>increase consciousness and transform.</p>
	<p>Putting the children central to the process.</p>	<p>Huge workload but full of ideas, energy, and enthusiasm – PAR was the perfect choice. The TAs role was crucial whereby she facilitated the tasks to allow observations to take place. Reflecting she voice how empowered she also felt and has since also returned to learning.</p>
	<p>Some children were slow to take advantage of participatory opportunities. Right answerism dominated and seeing that multiple solutions were accepted as 'correct' was a difficult concept.</p>	<p>Initial exploration of seminal authors Hart's Ladder, Sheir and Lundy, left the children asking which one was correct. Understanding that all the authors had something to offer and that we could choose which we wanted to use as a framework was new for many.</p>
<p>Structure, Communication & Presentation Relating to using academic style & referencing; presenting, managing & sharing information in different modes; communicating concepts, findings & ideas for different audiences</p>	<p>Tutor feedback TMA 02: Find literature that covers photographic evidence</p>	<p>The Mosaic approach (Clark, 2001) provided a number of methods appropriate & inclusive to a wide range of audiences.</p>

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	Messy design, large amount of data from children, adults, quantitative and qualitative was difficult to manage and the structure was questioned in the draft chapter feedback.	Reading the ORO exemplars was extremely useful.
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