

Exploring Collaborative Research with Academics and Young People

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Abstract

Collaborating with young people as researchers allows academics to explore child rights issues alongside those affected. This approach allows young people to access their right to be heard and listened to under Article 12 of the UNCRC, whilst also supporting their education, development, and socialisation. Furthermore, bringing together the insights from both young people and academics can lead to creative thinking grounded in both lived experience and evidence.

These ideas were highlighted by both young people and academics throughout the operations of a youth-led research project that ran between August 2022 and 2024. The aim of the group was to champion creative youth voice methodology and facilitate young people's participation in decision-making spaces, using research as a mechanism for advocacy. This project became a case study showing the strengths and limitations of youth-led participation and the role of academia in supporting youth-led research. The members of the group contributed to reports, presented at conferences, and created resources for academics. Following these opportunities, those involved were asked to reflect on the experience focusing on additional support they would have liked to receive as well as highlighting how academics could become champions of youth-led research.

The data collected through the evaluation inspired a number of resources, methodologies, and training sessions created by young people. They aim to raise awareness of the power of youth-led research whilst acknowledging risk, and provide realistic steps allowing academics to apply children's rights to their contexts. An interactive resource for young people was also published which provides the background information they need to decide if academic research is right for them and are guided through the process using right-based language. Resources and training sessions highlight the power imbalance, supporting researchers to understand this dynamic and work collaboratively with young people and partners so all strengthened are valued.

References

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Arthur Templeman-Lilley is a children's rights advocate and independent youth participation consultant. He advises academics on collaborative, rights-based research methods and develops resources to help young people feel confident engaging in research. Arthur authored *Pause, Play, Fast-Forward*, an illustrated history of children's rights in Wales, and works with organisations including UNICEF and the Diana Award to embed youth voice in research, policy, and practice.