



OVERVIEW

THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH CLUSTER WAS TO EXPLORE DESIGN FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (0-18 YEARS) IN LEARNING CONTEXTS. IT BROUGHT TOGETHER EXPERTISE FROM ACROSS ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES, DESIGNERS, STAKEHOLDERS AND USERS TO EXPLORE EXISTING AND NEW MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGIES TO SHAPE RESEARCH THAT FOCUSES ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DEVELOPING CHILD, EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE, AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE FACTORS ON DESIGN.

THE RESEARCH CLUSTER FOCUS WAS ON THE INFLUENCE OF DESIGN THROUGH ATTENTION TO THE VISUAL CONTEXT WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT, CLASSROOMS AND NON-TRADITIONAL LEARNING SPACES. THE TERM 'VISUAL CULTURE' WAS APPLIED TO REFLECT OUR INTENTION TO EXPLORE THE CUMULATIVE, TACIT AND SPECIFIC EFFECTS OF THE VISUAL FOCI. THE OVERARCHING AIM IS TO PROVIDE POLICY MAKERS AND PRACTITIONERS WITH A BASIS FOR DETERMINING A DESIGN STRATEGY AIMED AT ENHANCING TEACHING AND LEARNING.

Activities

Five 'exchanges' were held during the year. The first meeting was intended to open up the way that the different disciplines and professions interpret the view of the child as evidenced in images produced across the UK in the 2001 'The School I'd Like' archive. The next event focussed on developing innovative methodologies to engage children's perspective in the design process. The third and fourth exchanges involved young children; the first designing a city, the second recording the visual culture of their school environment. The final meeting allowed reflection and planning for the future. A jiscmail online discussion supported these activities throughout the year.

Insights

There is an honourable history of educationalists and architects collaborating in the redesign of school buildings to realise advances in pedagogy through the material and visual environment. The cluster became more aware of this history as we progressed. As well as the importance of underpinning projections to the future with a sound understanding of the past. The exchanges through the year embedded the commitment to participatory research with children and young people and enabled the exploration and illumination of cross disciplinary perspectives. The significance of the visual culture of school is poorly understood and children are certainly well placed to advise. What unites the cluster is a belief in the value of listening to children and that given a chance to offer their ideas and views and tell of their experience, children can make adults think differently and see the possibilities of change.

For the future, the cluster will aim to establish research webs of linked schools who are involved in re-design or new build in the UK and abroad and using an innovative image-based action research strategy, seek to illuminate the practical realisation of children's perspectives in design.