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| **International Froebel Conference 2023** | |
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| **Presentation Title** | Framing values: Insights from a PhotoVoice project with international service learning partners in Kolkata. |
| **Links to theme** | Creativity and symbols: Ideas taking visible form |
| **Abstract** | *‘Man is deprived of one of the principal means of self-education and self-knowledge if one takes away from him that power to create symbols, to see ideas given visible form’ (Froebel in Lilley 1967:47).*  The Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education in Maynooth University is currently engaged in a long-term educational partnership with the HOPE Foundation – the Froebel HOPE Teacher Education Partnership (FHTEP). The HOPE Foundation is a non-governmental development agency which organises health and education projects to support children and their families in India. For over 15 years, Froebel Department staff and alumni teachers have been working alongside our Indian counterparts in a variety of different education settings in Kolkata, modelling Froebelian and child-centred teaching methodologies.  This presentation shares findings from a research project carried out with Indian teachers who work with children from street and slum-connected communities in Kolkata, who shared their professional perspectives and personal narratives through the medium of photographs. PhotoVoice is a method that can support the exploration of complex topics and support participant-generated visual data as a form of ‘cultural self-portrayal’ (Pauwels, 1996). PhotoVoice is a non-didactic research method which privileges democratic practices and pursuits (Sánchez, 2015). As such, Luttrell (2020) describes it as ‘collaborative seeing’, given that images can be regarded as ‘windows’ or ‘mirrors’ for us to reflect back and understand social reality.  As international service learning is often beset by unequal power dynamics and unequal power structures, we wanted to use the PhotoVoice project as an opportunity for self-reflection, as well as a mechanism of providing a ‘voice, via camera, to members of communities not typically represented (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 486). Research findings reveal the significance of a Froebelian ethos to the work of the Indian teachers, their commitment to active and participative methodologies, and the importance they attach to creativity in their pedagogy and practice. Moreover, the strong values which underpin these teachers’ motivations, indicate a strong rights-based approach to their educational philosophy and help frame the responsibility they feel to empower vulnerable populations through education. |
| **Key words** | Values, PhotoVoice, international service learning |