Abstract: International research is common practice in many fields of science and a variety of international projects from the most diverse fields of research can be found through the major academic search engines. However, expanding the search in the direction of metaperspectival reflection on international participatory research might be unsuccessful, as there is scarce literature on the topic. This article is based on experiences with children in the international participatory research project called “Learning Together, Living Diversity”, which was carried out using the photovoice method to involve the children in the process as co-researchers. As international research differs considerably from national research, many challenges may be encountered, especially in field research and mainly in regards to getting in touch and interacting with the foreign country, its people and culture. The aim of this paper is to put into writing the reflexive processing of the cross-border research experience of the two cooperation partners Guillermina Chabrillon (Argentina) and Corinne Butschi (Switzerland), who planned and organised the field work in two Argentinian kindergartens together. The challenges which they faced and the role of both language and cultural background will be described in a practical way. It will be shown that reliable and good cooperation partnerships become even more important when the logistics of international research projects is not only complicated by distance, but also by language and cultural barriers. Examples of the major challenges and the role of culture and other contextual factors in project planning and logistics when crossing linguistic and cross-cultural boundaries will be included, with the purpose of contributing to stimulating further research and a greater number of successful international cooperation partnerships.

Keywords: International participatory research, intercultural co-operation and understanding, photovoice.

Investigación internacional: desafíos, limitaciones y condiciones para el éxito. Reflexiones sobre un proyecto internacional participativo con niños

Resumen: La investigación a nivel internacional es una práctica muy extendida en una variedad de campos disciplinares y, a través de los principales buscadores académicos en Internet, se pueden encontrar numerosos proyectos internacionales de las más diversas áreas de investigación. Sin embargo, la búsqueda de trabajos que provean una reflexión metaperspectiva sobre métodos de investigación participativa podría no ser exitosa ya que es muy escasa la literatura sobre este tema. Este artículo se basa en las experiencias con niños y niñas en el marco de un proyecto internacional de investigación participativa llamado “Learning Together, Living Diversity” (“Aprendiendo juntos, viviendo la diver-
sidad”), que se llevó a cabo utilizando el método Fotovoz para involucrar a los niños en el proceso como coinvestigadores. Como el proceso de investigación a nivel internacional difiere notablemente de uno llevado a cabo en un contexto nacional, pueden surgir numerosos desafíos, principalmente en la investigación de campo y, en particular, al ponerse en contacto e interactuar con el país extranjero – con su gente y cultura. El objetivo de este trabajo es describir el proceso reflexivo de la experiencia de investigación transnacional de dos investigadoras asociadas en un trabajo cooperativo: Guillermina Chabrillon (Argentina) and Corinne Butschi (Switzerland), quienes planificaron y organizaron en conjunto el trabajo de campo en dos jardines de infantes argentinos. Se detallarán los desafíos que enfrentaron y el rol tanto de los sustratos lingüísticos como culturales. Se mostrará la gran relevancia que cobra un trabajo cooperativo bueno y confiable cuando la logística de un proyecto de investigación internacional se complica no sólo por distancias sino también por barreras lingüísticas y culturales. Se presentarán ejemplos de los principios desafíos y el rol de la cultura y otros factores contextuales en la planificación y logística de un proyecto cuando se cruzan fronteras lingüísticas y culturales con el objetivo de intentar estimular nuevas investigaciones y un mayor número de exitosos trabajos cooperativos internacionales.

**Palabras clave:** investigación participativa internacional, cooperación y entendimiento intercultural, Fotovoz.

### 1. Introduction

This contribution is based on a practical example, namely the project “Learning Together, Living Diversity”, which was carried out from July 2016 to July 2019 by the University of Zurich (Institute for Educational Science, Chair of Special Education: Society, Participation and Disability) and financially supported by the Stifterverband der deutschen Wissenschaft (Leopold Klinge Foundation).

This international participatory project aimed at researching on the topic of diversity from a child’s perspective, by working with children of kindergarten age (4 to 6). Two kindergartens with a total of 32 children in Switzerland and two others with a total of 52 children in Argentina took part. It was carried out using photovoice, a method which attempts to engage community participants: here, children, “as active research participants by giving them cameras and inviting them to take pictures dealing with various aspects of their lives” (Jorgenson & Sullivan, 2010, p. 1). Later, the photos were used in the interview process to explore the subjective meaning of the images, and children were asked to explain their photographs in little groups.

Discussions about research with children as central informants of their own life worlds has been uncommon for a relatively a long time (Christensen & James, 2008, p. 1).

“Traditionally, childhood and children’s lives have been explored solely through the views and understandings of their adult caretakers who claim to speak for children. This rendered the child as object and excluded him/her from the research process. In part, this perspective has been challenged by the perspective in which children have different cognitive and social developmental traits that the researcher who wishes to use children as informants needs to consider in their research design and research methodology” (Christensen & James, 2008, p. 2f).

In recent years, however, this view has changed, so that the focus is now more on research with children rather than on research on children. The photovoice method is considered a