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Exploring young children's voices

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Appendices





Appendix A

Letter to the Parents of All Children and the Focal Children

Letter to the parents of all children involved in the research

To the parents/caregivers of

What do children think about school? What do they appreciate in doing at school and what is not appreciated? What do they presume that they will learn and what will be educated in school? Do they feel that learning will only take place in school or elsewhere too?

To teachers, interacting with children daily, these might be interesting questions. Asking children these kinds of questions and carefully listening to children on what they will have to say, may contribute to a better understanding of children. And then, a better understanding may contribute to insights in how education could contribute even better to children's development.

Interesting questions for teachers, but not only for them.

My name is Anja Tertoolen and I am working as a teacher trainer at an university of applied sciences. I am educating students to become primary school teachers, with a focus on future teachers in the lower years in primary school (grade 1 and 2).

For well educating future teachers, it is important that teacher trainers keep investing in their own professional development. For me, it is important to stay involved in the continuing development of young children's education with respect to my students. Recently, I decided to start a PhD research on young children's views on their educational arrangements (children aged 5–6). Educational views are discussed on a regular basis with teachers and students, but not with young children yet, certainly not when they are quite young.

The school of your child has shown an interest in this research and agreed in making a contribution. This is only possible when the parents give their consent as well, also on behalf of their child. My question is, whether you, as parents/caregivers, would agree that your child will be observed during daily activities for a week and that some of those activities will be videotaped. All the information will be handled with care and confidentially. None of the children, nor the obtained results, will be recognizable. The children's names will not be used and the videotapes will not be shown in public areas.

In advance I would like to thank you for your cooperation.

Letter to the parents of the focal child involved in the research

To the parents/caregivers of

What do children think about school? What do they appreciate in doing at school and what is not appreciated? What do they presume that they will learn and what will be educated in school? Do they feel that learning will only take place in school or elsewhere too?

To teachers, interacting with children daily, these might be interesting questions. Asking children these kinds of questions and carefully listening to children on what they will have to say, may contribute to a better understanding of children. And then, a better understanding may contribute to insights in how education could contribute to children's development even better.

Interesting questions for teachers, but not only for them.

My name is Anja Tertoolen and I am working as a teacher trainer at an university of applied sciences. I am involved in educating students to become primary school teachers, with a focus on future teachers in the lower years in primary schools (grade 1 and 2).

For well educating future teachers, it is important that teacher trainers keep investing in their own professional development. For me, it is important to stay involved in the continuing development of young children's education with respect to my students. Recently, I decided to start a PhD research on young children's views on their educational arrangements (children aged 5–6). Educational views are discussed on a regular basis with teachers and students, but not with young children yet, certainly not when they are quite young.

The school of your child has shown an interest in this research and agreed in making a contribution. This is only possible when the parents give their consent as well, also on behalf of their child. My question is, whether you, as parents/caregivers, agree that your child will be observed during daily activities for a week and that some of those activities will be videotaped. All the information will be handled with care and confidentially. None of the children, nor the obtained results, will be recognizable. The children's names will not be used and the videotapes will not be shown in public areas.

During the week in which the children are observed, I would like to have a conversation or two with some of the children about his/her opinions about school and videotape these conversations as well. Would you agree with your child's involvement and the video recordings? Obviously, these interactions and recordings are dealt with in the same confidential way as described above. And of course, your child will be asked for his/her cooperation and will be informed about every right to withdraw his/her cooperation at any moment.

Finally, I would like to ask you whether you would be willing to be interviewed about your own opinions on your child's education. This interview will be audiotaped. In behalf of this interview a suitable moment will be arranged by mutual agreement.

In advance I would like to thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix B

B.1 Organized Activities for Children: Instructions, Examples, and Questionnaires

1. Activity with a disposable photo camera

Material

A disposable camera for each child involved

Introduction

“I would really like to know what you consider important in school. You all know the classroom and the school very well, and I do not. I think, that I can certainly learn a lot from you. So, I would like to explore together with you about what you consider important. Actually, I would like to look through your eyes! That is not really possible of course, but I brought something with me, what might help. A photo camera for each of you, to make pictures of all kinds of things in school of what is important to you. Are you willing to help me to look through your eyes?”

First, let’s see what the camera looks like, and what you’ll have to do to make a picture.

Whether there is anything of importance to make a picture of, you know best. What is important to X, might be important to Y as well as to Z, but that does not have to be case at all. You are allowed to choose anything to make a picture of. Nothing is silly or whatever, as long as you think it important to you.

Let’s see. Is there anything you consider important around here, for....?”

Conclusion

“Thank you very much. I will take the cameras with me now to have the pictures developed. Within a few days I would like to look at the pictures together with you, and listen to what you would like to share with us about them.”

2. Activity with propositions (videotaped)

Material

Three cards with on each card an emoticon: a smiling face, an angry face, and a face with a neutral expression. For each child, three identical small boxes with a groove on top and on each box one of the same emoticons as on the cards. A set of small cards for each child, numbered 0 to 12.

Introduction

“I have three boxes in a row, here in front of me, and on each box you can see a face. Could you tell me what these different faces stand for (showing the three cards, each with an emoticon on it too)? (*In summary:*) the first face looks glad (pointing at the box left). This face looks angry (pointing at the box on the right). And there is also a box with a face in between: not angry, neither glad (pointing at the box in the middle). Tell me: when are you looking angry for instance, and when are you looking glad? Good. I am going to give you all, three of those boxes. Now I will give you all a small card as well (the card with number 0 on it). I am going to read out loud a question, and afterwards you may put your small card in one of the boxes in front of you. There are no right or wrong answers. It is completely up to you to choose in which box you would like to put the card.”

The example

“There are children, who really like to go to school (card with the smiling face is shown). There are children, who don't like to go to school (card with the angry face is shown). And there are children, who sometimes like to go to school and sometimes not (card with the neutral face is shown). And what about you? Do you like to go to school? If so, put your small card in the box with the glad face. If you don't like to go to school, put your small card in the box with the angry face. If you like to go to school sometimes, and sometimes not, then you put your small card in the box in the middle. Very good.”

The 12 propositions

At each proposition, each child gets a small card with the according number, and the children are asked to choose the box with the emoticon that represents their feelings in the best way.

1. When you are allowed to choose yourself what you would like to do in the classroom (*present two examples*), how do you feel?
2. How do you feel when the teacher is telling you what you'll have to do (*present two examples*)?
3. When you have to do difficult tasks, how do you feel?

4. How do you feel, when the teacher is assisting you in performing difficult tasks?
5. There are all kinds of rules in the classroom (*present two examples*), what do you think about that?
6. When you have to do an activity on you own - without other children -, how do you feel?
7. How do you feel when you have the opportunity to tell your teacher something personal/in private?
8. When you are at work or playing with other children, how do you feel?
9. How do you feel when you are playing outside, on the playground?
10. How do feel when you are thinking about school?
11. How do you feel when you are able to talk about school at home?
12. How do you feel when school is finished?

3. Semi-structured interview about an ideal school (videotaped)

Introduction

“Sometime before, I have asked you questions about what is going on in school and what you think about it. Now I am very curious to listen to your ideas about school, if it were completely up to you to make up/invent your own school. What would your school look like? What could and also would you like to do in such a school? And who should be around in school too?”

Other questions

1. What would you like to do most at school then, when it were completely up to you? How often: every day / sometimes? What would you certainly not want to do, for...?
2. What would be the first thing to do when you would arrive in school? Would you like to do it on your own, or together with peers, or...? Who? How would it turn out?
3. What would the school look like (classrooms, hall, outside et cetera). What would you like to remove from that school (compared to your school now)?
4. If it were up to you, would there be school every day? In the morning, in the afternoon?
5. What would your classroom look like? What should stay in the classroom. What could be removed? What are you missing now?
6. Where should the school be? At the same spot, for... At a different spot, for...
7. Who would also have to be in school (peers / friends / teachers / other adults / animals et cetera). What would you be doing? What would the others be doing?
8. What do you think your parents would say about such a school and how they

would feel (*referring to the emoticons of the propositions*)? What do they consider important to be educated in school, you think?

9. What would your teachers say about such a school and how they would feel (*referring to the emoticons of the propositions*)? What do they consider important to be educated in school, you think?
10. What do you think that is important to be educated in school?
11. It would be good/not good to have such a (new, different school), for....
12. Finally, is there anything else you would like to share with us about this (new, different) school?

4. Talking about pictures (videotaped)

Introduction

“I have brought the pictures with me you have made a few days ago. I would like to look at them together with you, and talk about them, for I am very curious about your stories. Is that o.k. with you?”

1. Now, looking at the pictures, do you remember where you made them?
2. About which pictures would you like to tell something?
3. What is your nicest picture? Could you tell us, what is so nice about it?
4. Do you have another nice picture? Is there a story to tell about it?
5. Do you also have a picture about something that is not so nice in school? Which picture(s)? Would you like to tell about it?
6. Is there a picture you would really like to keep for a long time? What is so important about the picture?
7. Is there another picture you certainly would like to keep for a long time? What could you tell about it?

Conclusion

A discussion together with the children about what they would like to do with the pictures. For instance: take them home at once, show them in the classroom and keep them in school for a while, or share them with peers and others. Children could also stick (some of) the pictures on a large piece of colored cardboard.

B.2 Questionnaires for Teachers and Parents/Caregivers

1. Interview guide teachers (semi-structured interview – audio recorded)

Introduction

“What are children’s ideas and educational notions about school? What are things they like to do and what are things they do not like? With adults and older children notions and opinions about educational matters are discussed on a regular basis. This is not so obvious with young children, though they have every right to be listened to. In this study I would like to get a better understanding of the educational perspectives of teachers as well as children. Therefore, I would like ask you the following questions.”

Questions

1. Could you describe in a few catchwords, which are important to you, the nature of your school?
2. What are the powerful, solid aspects of the school (educational philosophy, atmosphere, educational content, colleagues, population of parents, organization et cetera)? Could you give some examples?
3. What are less powerful, less solid aspects of the school (educational philosophy, atmosphere, educational content, colleagues, population of parents, organization et cetera)? Could you give some examples?
4. What are your expectations about the children in your class? Could you give some examples?
5. What would you like to contribute to the children’s development in your class/school? Why? How? Could you give some examples?
6. What are your roles as a teacher? Could you give some examples? What do you think the children will notice about those (different) roles and how?
7. What are your aspirations with regard to teacher’s roles? Why? Could you give some examples?
8. What do you consider your own specific strength/power (relationships with the children, activities, organization, colleagues, parents et cetera)? How does it show, do you think?
9. What is the essence, the core of education in your class (educational content, pedagogics, didactics, organization)? Could you give some examples?
10. What are you missing in educating, or are you carrying out insufficiently? How do you deal with it?
11. How do you wish the children will remember their staying in school, with you and your colleagues later on? Why?
12. Are there some remarkable aspects in the ways of acting, expressions, or opinions

- of (some of) the children, you could identify as your own acting, expressions, or opinions too? Could you give some examples?
13. Are there opinions or ways of acting, expressions or opinions of (some of) the children, you recognize as ways of acting, expressions or opinions of their parents too? Could you give some examples?
 14. Finally, are there any other issues you would like to bring forward now? Or questions you (still) have?

2. Interview guide parents/caregivers (semi-structured interview – audio recorded)

Introduction

“What are children’s ideas and educational notions about school? What are things they like to do and what are things they do not like? With adults and older children notions and opinions about educational matters are discussed on a regular basis. This is not so obvious with young children, though they have every right to be listened to. In this study I would like to get a better understanding of the educational notions of parents as well as their children. Therefore, I would like ask you the following questions.”

Questions

1. Your child/children attend(s) the ... school. Could you describe in a few catchwords, which are important to you, the nature of the school?
2. Could you explain why you have chosen this school for your child(ren)?
3. What do you appreciate about the school (activities, organization, atmosphere, children, teachers, contacts with parents et cetera)? Could you give some examples?
4. What are less likeable aspects of the school (ditto)? Could you give some examples?
5. What do(es) your child(ren) think about the school/class, according to you? How does it show? (Are there differences of opinion among your children?)
6. (About) what do(es) your child(ren) tell about school/class? What is your opinion about what he/they tell(s)?
7. Do you think your child(ren) consider(s) school important? If so, what do(es) he/they consider important, according to you?
8. At what moments do(es) your child(ren) tell you about school? Why is that? Could you give some examples?
9. What do you expect from the school/class for your child(ren)? Why?
10. What should be the focus of the school? What should your child(ren) do in school in particular / be educated in, according to you?
11. Do you notice differences/similarities in views between the school/class and at home (contact with children, rules, activities, atmosphere et cetera). Could you

- give some examples? What do you think about it?
12. What would the ideal school for your child(ren) look like? Why? Could you give some examples?
 13. Do you recognize some aspects in what your child thinks/does, which you notice in what his teacher(s) express(es) too? Or notice in what you express yourself? Could you give some examples?
 14. Finally, are there any other issues about school/education you would like to bring forward now?