

VOICE

Voicing children Opportunities
Interaction Collective decision
making Education

Children's participation in the educational process

From rhetoric to practice:
the need for constant reflection

"...we need to take a critical approach to the idea of children's participation in the educational process in order to avoid it becoming a new 'belief'"
(Harcourt & Einarsdottir, 2011)



H.F.R.I.
Hellenic Foundation for
Research & Innovation

The project was supported by the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (H.F.R.I.) under the "3rd Call for Action "Science and Society" "Research, Innovation and Dissemination Hubs" (Project Number: 1953).



ARISTOTLE
UNIVERSITY OF
THESSALONIKI

What we know today...

From the 'vulnerable',
impulsive, immature, with
limited abilities, children who
need constant attention,

at

Competent, interactive,
active people

*On the one hand and
universal childhood with
predictable characteristics,*


at

multiple, individual, childhoods
that are socially, historically
and geographically
differentiated

From teacher-centred and
child-centred learning,

at

teacher and children thinking
and learning together



Pause for reflection...

Reflections that require... thought (1)

- What is the quality of children's participation if their involvement is limited to 'a few good ideas' during the school year?
- Do we really know why we say 'yes' to children's participation in the educational process? Or are we following another 'fashion' with... 'admittedly good intentions'?
- Do we really believe that children 'know better' than adults about their needs?
- Do we know what makes it difficult for us (personally) to share the power of education with young children?

Reflections that require... thought (2)

- ▶ Does the idea of 'the strong and capable preschool child who can express his or her needs and interests and make choices on issues that concern him or her' create another... entrenched view of young children from a 'Western' perspective?
- ▶ Do we know the limitations of young children's 'voices'?
- ▶ Are the voices of young children... theirs?

Reflections that require... thought (3)

- ▶ In seeking the voices of children, do we forget the importance of their... silences?
- ▶ What steps are we taking to make child participation in the classroom more than 'good pedagogical practice'? How do we diffuse the process of empowering children and the change it can bring 'outward'? Do we create ... 'caricatures' of children as 'acting subjects'?

The multi-level and... messy voices of children*

"Our concern with children's voices, which has value both from an ethical and research point of view, seems to have failed in reflection ..."

* (Spyrou, 2011)

Contemporary literature invites us to think about...

- That 'voice' is also a social construction - the better we know the children in our class, the more we can understand where each 'individual' voice comes from.
- As a social construct my 'definition' may not fit how different cultural groups conceptualise 'voice' - what is the definition I have adopted? Does it exclude some groups of children?

- We know that in modern pedagogy there is no room for theories of... extremes - be careful not to create another one: *the vulnerable and dependent child vs the autonomous and capable child*, (see "messy" voices).
- Definition (again!): how do we define 'voice'? Does it describe 'intelligible', clear, flowing speech? Does our definition fit a discourse that is... under construction?
- In seeking the voices of children, do we forget how revealing their silence can be?

"Our rush to listen to [children's] voices runs the risk of not being as careful as we should be in how we try to listen to those voices and in how we [choose] methods and methodologies. 'Listening better' involves listening to silence and that silence is not neutral or empty. So [effective] listening requires the researcher or evaluator to be flexible and reflective as they try to decode their encounter with the child. Through such a process, the interpretation of silence becomes an integral part of the analysis and in time could contribute to the development of methodologies that investigate silence in conjunction with methodologies that seek 'voice'"

(adapted from Lewis 2010:20, in Spyrou, 2015)



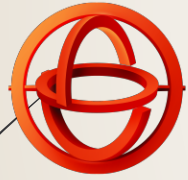
So...

voices & silences...

Bibliography

Spyrou, S. (2011) The limits of children's voices: from authenticity to critical, reflexive representation. *Childhood*, 18(2), 151-165.

Spyrou, S. (2016). *researching children's silences: exploring the fullness of voice in childhood research. childhood*, 23(1), 7-21.
doi:10.1177/0907568215571618



H.F.R.I.
Hellenic Foundation for
Research & Innovation

The project was supported by the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (H.F.R.I.) under the “3rd Call for Action “Science and Society” “Research, Innovation and Dissemination Hubs” (Project Number: 1953).



Voicing children Opportunities
Interaction Collective decision
making Education



ARISTOTLE
UNIVERSITY OF
THESSALONIKI