Start the Change – Can You Hear My Voice?

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to implement research founding's as a new concept of stronger cooperation between civil society and public institutions that care for children and young people that will simultaneously empower, educate and involve all stakeholders. Implementation will be achieved through education and empowerment of all stakeholders - children, young people and experts from these institutions in the field of non-violent communication, conflict resolution, mediation, active citizenship, self-actualization and youth volunteering and networking, which will affect the emotional health and well-being of young and preventing violence, promoting tolerance, self-actualization and peacebuilding. Here we present and interpret the results of qualitative research aimed to find personal visions of children and youth. Research was conducted in consideration of children's surroundings: school, family and local community. The main objectives of the research were to establish main opinions from children and youth perspective about their generation problems, possibilities, solutions and ideas for this problems and situations. In order to preserve values and context of protection of children's rights, we cherish and underline approach to children and young people as subjects in the society of knowledge for growth and progress. Results of the study direct us towards the need for social change from children's perspective.

1. Introduction

Forum for Freedom in Education, a non-governmental organization in the field of education, is implementing a project called "Your way! Volunteering and youth capacity for building a culture of peace" [1]. General aim of the project is to implement a new concept of stronger cooperation between civil society and public institutions, which take care of children and young people (primarily social care centres, schools and family centres) that will simultaneously empower, educate and involve all stakeholders. In order to implement the new concept of cooperation, it is necessary to examine the current status and needs of children and young people. Children are invited openly to say what they think is crucial for their involvement in school and the local community and what their personal vision and creative ideas that appear as possible solutions are. The entire study has gained an insight into the perceptions of children and young people about the importance and respect of their opinion. For the purposes of this study the *interests* of children were researched (ways' of choosing activities of interest and the conditions that influence the selection were identified) and the *level of satisfaction* of personal and peer *interests* were evaluated.

2. Methods

The target group for this study were children and young people aged 10 to 18. According to the spatial location, respondents come from primary and secondary schools in four counties 1) Zagrebačka County (N = 20), 2) the City of Zagreb County (N = 21), 3) Primorsko-Goranska County (N = 20) and 4) Splitsko-Dalmatinska County (N = 22). Total number of students from elementary schools is a 44; 20 boys and 24 girls aged 10 to14, and 39 secondary school students; 8 boys and 31 girls aged 14 to 18. Students were homogeneous by belonging to a particular school and the county, and heterogeneous in school success and communicative competence. The reference period refers to May 2012, when the survey was conducted.

The main research methods are focus groups. For the purpose of this study we organized eight focus groups with a total number of 83 students (10 to 18 years old), with a particular group comprised of 9

to 12 students what is considered to be the optimal group size, "small enough to allow each participant to take a stand, on the other hand is big enough so that it can develop a specific group dynamics " [4]. Furthermore, the research contains result analysis, which includes the collection of impressions, careful analysis of sets of transcripts and encoding of each group. Recorded audio recordings are transcribed, and the resulting transcripts are the basis for the result analysis. For the qualitative data analysis Program MAXQDA, VERBI GmbH, Germany was used. Encoded appearance was then verified by comparing the constant occurrence (Table 1).

3. Results

Table 1. shows 18 codes defined in accordance with the set objectives of the research. Frequency of appearance as well as the percentage of representation of certain codes in total cultivated transcripts indicate that the dominant representation has *"interests"* (396, 14.27 %). *"The problem"* as the code in the researched population of students is presented as follows in the series representation (302; 10.88 %), and t followed by a *"solution"* (259; 9.33 %) and *"ideas"* (252; 9.08 %). With the following code in a number of sizes representation, or code *"my opinion"* (229; 8.25 %), more than half of the collected material research is covered (51.81 %). In the category below, codes are characterized by the representation of the value of 5 % to 7 % and a code *"need"* with 6,92 % , followed by *"volunteering"* to 6.12 % , *"decision-making"* with 5.87 % , and *"out school - community"* with 5.48 %. The frequency of occurrence of values less than 5 % was obtained for the following codes: "School activity" (4.43 %), *"exactly who ?"* (4.07 %), *"Safety - YES"* (3.53 %), *"area of volunteering"* (3.42 %), *"school support"* (2.20 %), *"interest - m / f"* (2.13 %), *"Safety - NO"* (1.84 %), *"care"* (1.62 %) and the lowest values of "*family - a relationship"* (0.58 %). Group dynamics is evident from the data distribution of documents. Thus, the differences in *"interests between girls and boys"* together with the recognition of *"school as support"* appeared in six documents, which means that the two schools did not mention it at all. Together with the above, the codes *"out of school - community", "family - relationship"*, *"care"* and *"Safety - NOT"* are not mentioned in a single document.

Table 1. Encoded appearance

	Code	All coded segments	All coded segments %	Documents
1	interest	396	14,27	8
2	interest m/f	59	2,13	6
3	need	192	6,92	8
4	school as support	61	2,20	6
5	Exactly who?	113	4,07	8
6	school activities	123	4,43	8
7	out of school - community	152	5,48	7
8	family - relationship	16	0,58	7
9	problems	302	10,88	8
10	care	45	1,62	7
11	my opinion	229	8,25	8
12	decision making	163	5,87	8
13	safety- YES	98	3,53	8
14	safety - NO	51	1,84	7
15	solution	259	9,33	8
16	volunteering	170	6,12	8
17	area of volunteering	95	3,42	8
18	idea	252	9,08	8

Code – designation for each category defined in accordance with the aim of research; **All coded segments** – the total frequency of each code in the transcripts; **All coded segments**

% – relative frequency of each code (the ratio between the frequency of certain categories and the sum of the frequencies of all categories); **Documents** – number of focus groups in which each code appears

In continuation of the paper in order to meet the needs of this study, observation was made on *interests* of primary (PS) and secondary (SS) schools (identified ways of choosing activities of interest and factors that influence the selection) and the level of satisfaction of personal and peer interests was assessed.

Table 2. Elementary school (PS) students' interests reported according to importance (most important is first)

PS 1	PS 2	PS 3	PS 4
Play and fun	Friendship	Entertainment/socializing	Facebook
School	Facebook	Games	Friendship
Meeting new friends	Food	Sport	Meeting new friends
Sport	Games/PlayStation	School	School
Working on oneself	Mobile phones/music	Internet (Facebook, Skype, games)	Popularity
Popularity	Their own look	Singing and playing instruments	Twitter
Health	School		Games

The interests of participants included in the research (Table 2.) are primarily games, entertainment, socializing, going out, and meeting new friends. It seems they do the same via Internet - Facebook, Twitter, cell phones, PlayStation and similar computer games, via Skype and other technologies that create a postmodern society of the third millennium. Boys and girls of primary school present their interest in school as a relevant dimension of personal growth and development, but it also leads to an unfavourable attitude when it comes to entertainment, because their learning process offered by the educational institution they are currently attending, does not seem motivating, interesting and creative enough. In "thinking about the future" context, respondents from primary school consider education as interest and as a prerequisite for achieving better result when selecting further education, precisely selection of high school and enrolling in particular high school.

Table 3. Interests of students from secondary school (SS) reported according to importance (most important is first)

SS 1	SS 2	SS 3	SS 4
School	School	Going out/entertainment	Going out/entertainment
Going out/entertainment	Free time - hobby	School	Facebook
Sport	Going out/entertainment	Finding a job and good position	Music
Music	Seeking personality	Building personality	Popularity
Helping others	Independence	Sport	School
		Music	Money
		Free time	

Interests of secondary school students are examined on a personal level and the perceptual level of the whole generation (Table 3.). One of the most common responses was *"school"* which is understood as a necessity for the realization of future. Therefore, education in high school is recognized as a link to the labour market and security for status in society. An integral factor in the quality of life, especially among young people, is a way of spending free time [5], and the population of respondents in this sample highlights the lack of time to meet all the requirements the education system imposes, parallel with what they currently want (socializing with peers through media, sport activities, music and a variety of hobbies. For a detailed insight into the observed interests of students in primary and secondary school in the presented paper their evaluation to satisfy them as well as links to their thinking related to possible incentive and restrictive factors for such interest structures, is presented. Peers interests from elementary school at the discretion of the participants of the focus group (Figure 1.) are generally not satisfied. Respondents state that it is extremely important to examine the satisfaction of interest with a questionnaire or other instrument because they believe it is crucial to ask the students what they want. Students in high school have divided opinions with questions of satisfaction of the interests by all peers (Figure 2). Reasons for dissatisfaction arise from the capacity of smaller communities that often do not offer any facilities [6].
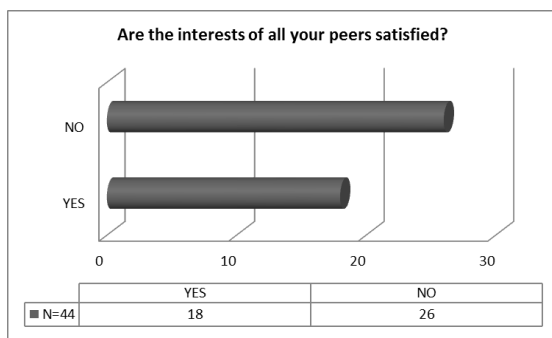

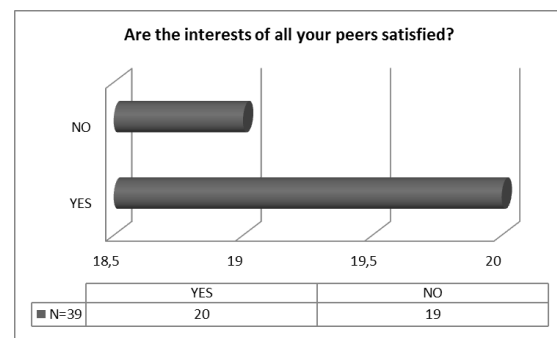Figure 1. Assessment of peer interest satisfaction for Primary school

Figure 2. Assessment of peer interest satisfaction for Secondary school

4. Discussion and conclusions

Known is the fact that all people do not mature at the same time, do not develop equally on the physical field and certainly not synonymous develop their personality. The most intensive development period of life and educational impact can certainly be found in childhood and adolescence. The child actively learns and develops, and gets help from parents, educators and teachers, each according to the role they have in the process of upbringing, education and the creation of an independent person [6]. Emotional stability of the child is built by his parents, while educators and teachers are the leaders and organizers of the training/learning process, because they know the pedagogy, didactics and methodology in which systematic human experience can be found in skills of raising and educating [7]. Without hesitation we take this opportunity to testify that such dangers are real and they need to resist all forces, both at the level of theory and at the level of practical functioning of the school as an institution. In this approach it is possible to see clearly repeatedly emphasized the indispensable role of philosophy of education and upbringing, whose responsible, modern and future-oriented questioning for educational reality in most cases depends on the overall orientation of pedagogical science and practice [8]. Pedagogical teleology is conceiving, brightens up the way, and shows the vital importance, giving it a value meaning [9]. The increase in the unemployment rate affects the existing problems in the Croatian society helped by the structural economic crisis. Unemployment in the context of the problem of youth has specific consequences of its long-term influence to prevent young people from taking an active role in society [10].

So optimism turns into superficiality, enthusiasm in fear or extremes, as soon as requirements of the classrooms meet the realities of society. We are searching for the values, and we know that by its definition - human being is a person with cognitive and value aspects. They are desirable good,

targets of human longing, something that we stream for, in what we find joy, „what makes man happy, builds him and refines." With them we are discovering new and ever-expanding horizons of securities. Values design, enrich and spiritualize human life. Consistence of all meaning and content of life is in their achievement [11].

Analogously history shows us moments of marginalization, subordination and complete disappearance of the previously mentioned factors necessarily lead to a one-dimensional man as their aspirations expressed by selecting food, clothing, fun ways as children and young adults desire today. We must not miss understand progress and development, but also find solutions listening to the future - our children and young people - who need models in life, ideals and values.

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