

Child Perspectives

Lisa Boa





A Froebelian approach

Observing young children

by Dr Stella Louis

Professional reading given to the
focus group

Pathways to Participation: Openings, Opportunities and Obligations

A New Model for Enhancing Children's Participation in Decision-making, in line with Article 12.1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

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The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has raised the profile of children's participation in the United Kingdom. Hart's 'ladder of participation' has been the most influential model in this field. This paper offers an alternative model, based on five levels of participation: 1. Children are listened to. 2. Children are supported in expressing their views. 3. Children's views are taken into account. 4. Children are involved in decision-making processes. 5. Children share power and responsibility for decision-making. In addition, three stages of commitment are identified at each level: 'openings', 'opportunities' and 'obligations'. The model thus provides a logical sequence of 15 questions as a tool for planning for participation. Copyright © 2001 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Introduction

Although there have been isolated efforts to enable children to participate in decision-making over many years (for example, Neill, 1962; Holt, 1974; Hoyles, 1989), the United Kingdom Government's ratification of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child in December 1991 has provided a powerful stimulus to discussion of the issue in the


Observing young children

by Dr Stella Louis, January 2022



The presentation
delivered to the focus
group

“Since the behaviour of even the youngest child is of great significance and the expression of his thoughts may so easily be forgotten or confused, parents ought to keep records of the child’s life in which they note down the first signs of his mode of thought, describe and interpret his development in all its aspects.” Froebel in Lilley 1967: 79



“Observation is about much more than describing what a child does. It means really watching and listening, being aware of the child’s actual development, recognising what interests, motivates and engages them, and then reflecting on what these observations tell us about the child’s learning. Observation means registering these details as significant and important and knowing how to use them to extend learning. ”

(Louis. S, 2022)

Observation is key

Gathering thoughts through:

Photos, film clips, writing

Do we think about what we want to capture? E.g. interest, development, relationships, behaviours, interactions, gestures, involvement, curiosity, connection.

Do we think about when? Is it when you want or when they want?

How do we interpret our observations?

Who do we discuss them with?

- Interplay between bodies, words and meanings.
- Learn how individual children communicate.
- Include all your senses and emotions.

*the 100
Languages*

No Way.
The Hundred is there.
The Child
Is made of one hundred.
The child has
A hundred languages
A hundred hands
A hundred thoughts
A hundred ways of thinking
Of playing, of speaking.
A hundred always a hundred
Ways of listening
Of marveling, of loving
A hundred joys
For singing and understanding
A hundred worlds
To discover
A hundred worlds
To invent
A hundred worlds
To dream.
The child has
A hundred languages
(and a hundred hundred
hundred more)
But they steal ninety-nine.
The school and the culture
Separate the head from the
body.
They tell the child:
To think without hands

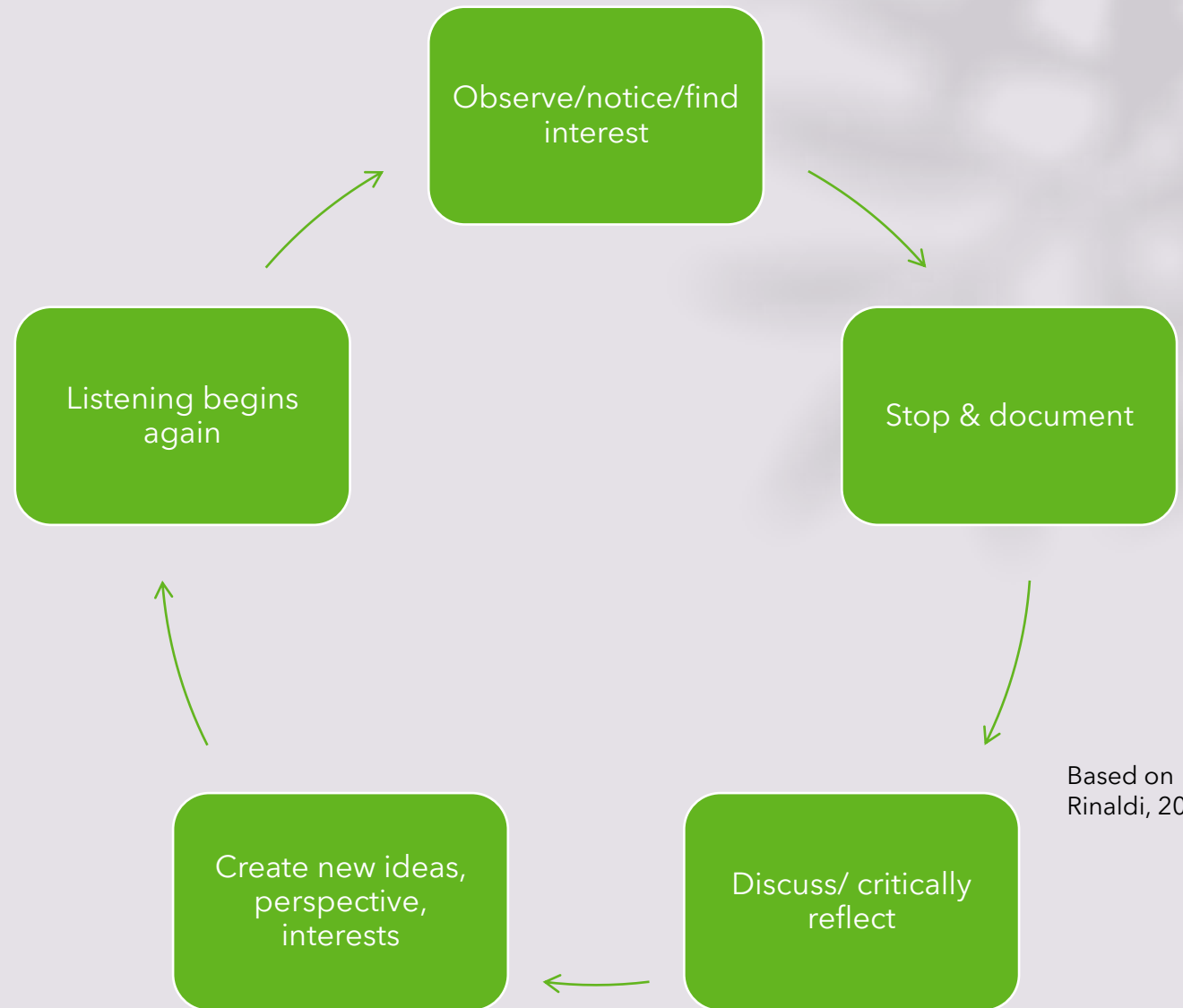
To do without head
To listen and not to speak
To understand without joy
To love and to marvel.
They tell the child:
To discover the world already
there
And of the hundred
They steal ninety-nine.
They tell the child:
That work and play
Reality and fantasy
Science and imagination
Sky and earth
Reason and dream
Are things
That do not belong together.
And thus they tell the child
That the hundred is not there.
The child says:
No way. The hundred is there.

*Loris Malaguzzi, Founder
of the Reggio Emilia
Approach*



“To observe without reflection was ‘empty observation’ and could never lead to real understanding.”

Liebschner 1992: 141



Based on Rinaldi, 2006.

Perspectives

Parents

Partner
agencies

Other
educators

Other
children - do
we ask them?

Collection tools



Photos



Film clips



Observation techniques -



Giving the child the camera - tours



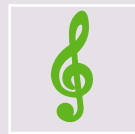
Mapping



Representations



Book making



Song, dance, art

Think about:

- Do you have an idea of what 'appropriate' participation/ play/ interaction looks like?
- How do you challenge these?
- Don't be frightened of the unexpected

Observation Types

- Time Sample
- Narrative - group, independent
- Frequency
- Running records
- Focus child
- Photos

What do we do with
their perspectives?

How do we take them
into account when
planning?

- e.g. - Do we take our observations to the take and say A is watching his peer closely, how can we support him to develop this social interaction?

Findings from project

- Initial test of materials
- Linking new knowledge to current knowledge

Reflections on:

- Current GIRFEC form 4's
- Current planning
- Tracking
- Observation
- The training

Initial test of materials

Form my initial test with SEYO I adapted some questions and added an evaluation sheet at the beginning of my focus group. This allowed me to capture a truer picture of what the practitioners where learning and how their thinking developed.

Linking new knowledge to current knowledge

During the focus group practitioners were linking their current learning on child perspective back to tools they had already used in their practice. They explored how the STAR analysis and enhanced what matters to me supported them in understanding what children are trying to communicate through their behaviour, body language and social situations. These tools had already supported them in capturing child's perspectives and looking deeper at what children were communicating.

“I think having more of the documentation showing all the different ways you could do it either if that was the STAR analysis, the enhanced what matters to me, that's had a massive impact on our journey for our ASN, having that as part of your presentation would be beneficial for others.” (SEYO).

This made me think about the principles behind these tools and could we incorporate these into the CLPL we are delivering? Potentially incorporating these tools to support the understanding of other practitioners.

Reflections on current GIRFEC form 4's

The group realised that they were not capturing child perspectives in regard to the children's targets on GIRFEC form 4's and that the children's perspectives did not influence the targets that were written. They acknowledged that most GIRFEC form 4's sit in a file away from the playroom floor and are only looked at during review periods. The group reflected on how they could incorporate capturing the child's perspectives in an everyday way and how these could then influence current GIRFEC form 4 targets.

It made me wonder if we actually set targets according to what children are telling us? Do we take observations over time to create a picture of what that child would like to do next in their learning e.g. a child continues to observe and allow another child into their space. Are our targets created with this in mind extending their skills to support them in interacting with that child or do we just choose a social target due to our and other professionals understanding of child development?

Reflections on current planning

The group started to ask themselves how inclusive their planning approaches were in the setting and how child perspectives were fed through their planning cycles and discussed at huddles. ***“We have started discussions about changing paperwork to include more support for ASN”*** This led to them developing their planning process. ***“we are adding in a ‘what matters to me’ in our planning evaluation and parts of the child’s ‘enhanced what matters to me’ is captured on our planning for everyone to see. Which allows the whole staff team to see what is happening for our nonverbal children”*** They are also looking at adapting their focus child paperwork to support a more holistic approach to collecting children observations. ***“that is going to be a change, instead of early language, early numeracy it will be SHANARRI”*** ***“we could link in the form 4 targets and that would allow elevation at the end of the focus fortnight”***

The group recognised that all children would benefit from this not just our before words children. Practitioners discuss the benefits it will bring to our quieter children and ask themselves if they really capture what all children are telling us through different perspectives.

Reflections on tracking

The group also went onto discuss how the current progression framework doesn't support all learners

“the way the focus is for the assessment and progression framework doesn't match for high end ASN, for example when we are doing the tracking it looked as if they weren't meeting anything, which isn't a true representation of them”

This made me think about how we could solve this problem and I intend to link with our central team to create a more inclusive approach to our assessment and progression framework.

Reflection on observation

All practitioners discussed how valuable it was to reflect on the methods they used to capture child perspectives and found it valuable to revisit observation styles. Especially time sampling and frequency observation techniques.

“Especially with how to record observations and the different types”

“I will now look at other methods of capturing observations”

“It was really good to have a reminder of all the different ways we can observe children and how we can tailor this to each child's individual needs. Also, the idea of observing children's learning as a video was really interesting and something I think would be really beneficial in our setting”

“I will use more of the time sampling observations”

This made me consider if we observe children when we want to or when the child is trying to tell us something? Especially our before words children who may not seek us out to tell us what their thoughts are.

“I really like the idea of incorporating videos into our observations, I think that's a really good idea for a lot of our nonverbal children. Especially there is one child in my group that I can think of that when we are taking observations we are kinda guessing what it is he is actually saying or doing. Whereas a video would be nice to put in and we would know for sure. I think it would be nice for parents to see as well”

This prompted a discussion on the importance of reflecting together and gathering different perspectives about what a child might be trying to tell us through nonverbal means. The group also thought it would be a good idea to have families reflect with them on videos. Giving everyone around the child a deeper understanding of the child, how they communicate, what they might be communicating and how we could then support the child in developing interests and skills. This made me wonder if we come together as a team around the child enough? Allowing us to reflect on observational videos, especially with our partner agencies. The focus group acknowledged that capturing child perspectives through videos would benefit all children not just our before words children.

Reflection on the training

"Good to refresh your memory"

"Just different views on things and how to do things, different ways of thinking, you can get stuck in a rut sometimes"

"I think its been really good of having the discussions, cus its not just been looking at something" "I definitely take more in when its like practical learning and having a talk. I don't focus as much when its just like looking at it"

"having examples, you can relate it to your own practice"

All practitioners felt they increased their knowledge of what child perspectives are and their confidence in capturing these. At the beginning the group used 'child's voice' to describe child perspective. They had a good understanding that 'voice' could be captured in many ways through the 100 languages of children. Potentially this is a change in terminology for them. I feel this is a change in language and wonder if this needs to be disseminated more widely.

The group also felt that the training would be beneficial for all staff in the team and would like some time devoted to this.

The group thought that QR codes would be a good way of sharing the videos with team around the child and would allow for families to have easy access to the them. The team raised that they would like training on how to use QR codes. This made me think who I could incorporate this into further CLPL and do all nurseries have access to videoing children. It also made me think about ethics behind videos and sharing these? How do we seek the child's permission to share these with others?

Where do we go now?

- Spread our training to the whole team
- Take findings to the working group developing guidance and CLPL around planning for individual children's needs.
- Create a working group to develop assessment and progression framework
- Continue to develop my own understanding of children's perspectives and collate practice examples that can be used to support others.