

Story/Dialogue Workshop

With the Canadian Story/Dialogue method¹ as a starting point a new evaluation method - concerning children's action competence regarding health - has been developed and piloted in a Danish context². **The method is an evaluation tool for children but also includes a process to increase empowerment.** The theoretical background of this empowerment evaluation consists of the participatory and action oriented health education, combined with the Appreciative Inquiry and Affordances Theories.

Data is generated through dialogue with children, 'theory notes' are written and observations made during the playing elements that are added to increase the sense of community and creativity. The analysis incorporates the theory notes as well as traditional qualitative analysis and observational process analysis.

The evaluation is performed as a workshop in the following phases:



¹ Labonte, Ronald; Feather, Joan & Hills, Marcia (1999): A story/dialogue method for health promotion knowledge development and evaluation. *Health Education Research*, Vol. 14, no. 1, page 39-50

² Pedersen, Ulla (2009): Vurdering af Story/Dialogue-metoden som evalueringsmetode inden for sundhedsfremme. In: Carlsson, Monica; Simovska, Venka & Jensen, Bjarne Bruun (Ed.): *Sundhedspædagogik og sundhedsfremme*. Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag

Preparations:

The participating children are asked to prepare a case story by this question: “Think back on the activities that you have begun or have been a part of in this project or activity. Choose an example of something you think is particularly valuable or interesting. Think about: What was good here – and in what way? Why? What did you do, which was special? What did the other people do? What kind of experiences could other people learn from?”

The workshop:

The participants are placed into groups of 5-8 children. You can have a conference with several workshops at a time, but each workshop needs its own room and an adult facilitator.

The workshop starts: The children share their stories. The group reflects on each story – finds parallels – ask questions. They use a reflection tool to help them ask questions and the adult moderator helps them to reflect in dept. The reflection tool use four categories of open questions to generate a structured dialogue:

1. What do you see happening here? (Description. The children are invited to describe what is happening in their case story. They ground the explanation in experience).
2. Why do you think it happens? (Explanation. The children are invited to discuss on causes, where they begin to interpret or make sense of what has been described.
3. So what have we learned from our own experiences? (Synthesis. The children are invited to join in a synthesis, or distillation, of new knowledge.
4. Now what can we do about it? (Action. The children are invited to translate their new knowledge into normative claims of what health promotion practice ought to do.

During the reflection and dialogue about their experiences and thoughts about them, the children create insight cards by writing key words and sentences on colored pieces of paper and put them up on the wall. This provides new knowledge. Then they categorize the key words and point out the most important about each category.

After the workshop the reflections are written down in theory notes. These notes are – in addition to the insight cards - the documentation of the evaluation and can be used to start new discussions in another group.



The table is set with colored pieces of paper for the insight cards:
The Story/Dialogue workshop can begin.

What are the effects of using the method?

The process of evaluative dialogue increases the children's motivation, the ability to develop creative visions as well as critical sense. The potentials of the method justify introduction in health promotion arenas as a tool to develop and increase children's participation in evaluation as well as in health promotion processes. The new Story-Dialogue method is an evaluation method, which gives empowerment to the participants in health promoting projects. These health-promoting projects put focus on a process where personal narratives lead to thought processes in the group, analysis and planning of changes. The intention is at the same to evaluate and strengthen the ability to act and to be active.

In this way, the evaluator chooses an acknowledging focus where the group especially focus on what it succeeded in. This means that if you may think your group did not begin as you had hoped you would, then find one or more examples of the course of your work with health or with processes of change in another relation instead.

The Story/Dialogue Method for evaluation was used at the EU-funded project PoHeFa in November 2011 in Denmark.

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