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THE STORYCRAFTING METHOD & THE STORYCRAFTING VIDEO

THE STORYCRAFTING METHOD - INCREASES CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

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THE STORYCRAFTING METHOD

- INCREASES CHILDREN'S (and adults') PARTICIPATION

The Storycrafting method is a Finnish invention that promotes equal possibilities for the participants in a dialog (Riihelä 1991). It is an easy but yet strict method for creating stories in solidarity, for listening, and for documentation. The method helps creating and sharing unique, novel narratives and gives the floor to the client, the other person, especially to the children. UN's declaration of Rights of the Child emphasises children's rights for participation. In order to follow this statement, one needs to examine the dialogue among children and adults in institutional settings, and issues that prevent and enhance children's participation. When the Storycrafting method was developed, the emphasis was on changing children's position in the society. With Storycrafting method, children can be heard the way children want to be heard: children can choose the words, drawings, and acts they want to use to express themselves.

In Storycrafting you:

Ask the other person to narrate a story of free choice.

Write it down literally, in the same way that the teller expresses him/herself.

When the narrative is done, retell it, and give the author the opportunity to make any changes.

The adult writes down the story on a separate piece of paper, preferably in capital letters so that the child is, as early as possible, able to read the story. It is important to write down the story exactly as the child tells it. It is easier to write down the story of a child that uses standard language than of one using slang or colloquialisms. One has to control one's own desire to change the spoken language and correct mistakes made by the child. The purpose is to make it clear to the child that the adult is specifically interested in the child's own story. The aim is to inspire the child to tell about his or her own world and thoughts. The story can be included in the group's common story file or the children can include it in their personal files. The adult can ask the child to give her a copy of the story. It is important to give the feeling that the children have a copyright on their work and that it is not only being used for the purposes of the adult.

Children are Telling

Children are telling is a multi-scientific group of researchers and fieldworkers who are searching for children's diverse ways of producing knowledge and culture of their own.

The Storycrafting is one special method of bringing children's world visible for adults. The Storycrafting method has proved to be an excellent way to build up confident relations between clients and employees as well as between children and adults. The method supports disabled children in coping with their problems. It is a method that helps the staff to change their working strategies into more child- or client-centred practices. It also provides new means of co-operation between parents and employees. In the story-mail-network, named Storyride, children's own stories reach other children and adults in different countries. In the Storycrafting -

video you can observe how 3 – 6 year old children in day-care centres in Finland use their exuberant imagination to create their special narrative culture. The stories have been translated into English. The video (30-min.) shows some examples of how to apply the Storycrafting method with children in small groups.

The Storycrafting method comprises six principals:

Making an open situation, without hidden intentions for the encounters both in professional and every day settings.

- Giving the opportunity to equal participation.
- Giving the opportunity for exact documentation by the staff.
- Giving the opportunity for narration of free choice.
- Literal retelling, repetition of the story, for a deeper understanding.
- Creating interrelationships between children with the help of their own narratives.

STORYCRAFTING VERSUS STORYTELLING

The Storycrafting method differs from the traditional and still very useful storytelling in a couple of ways. Men have told stories to each other through the history. It is a good way to get acquainted with traditions, with other people, different cultures etc. It is also very useful in the contacts with children. The Storycrafting method does not replace the benefits of storytelling, but it brings something new and particular to the relation between attendants. The difference to storytelling is that in storycrafting you actively make situations for concrete sharing, by writing down the heard story and by retelling it. In addition you don't evaluate the content of the story or the way the narrative is dictated.

The Storycrafting method lies on a dynamic assumption of knowledge. It means that it is presumed that every human being, no matter of age, sickness or disabilities the narrator has a lot of knowledge and also the right to express it. In addition the Storyride method changes the specialist-centred and client-lowering professional dialog of three sequences where the specialist 1) makes the question, 2) the client answers the question and 3) the professional estimates the answer. The dynamic assumption of knowledge results in a more democratic conversation, where both participants have the equal opportunities to express initiatives, to evaluate and to participate. (See Riihelä 1996.) Storycrafting has also proved to give a deeper understanding of the child's problems in therapeutic and pedagogical settings. Employees who have applied Storycrafting in their work, have noticed, that the amount of time working with children increases compared to the feelings of great loss of time when using traditional methods. They have begun to listen, instead of only hearing to their clients and to understand instead of evaluate. The storycrafting situation itself has given the staff new meanings and a lot of energy. It has created shared meanings and collectiveness in the group. It has given disabled children self-respect and pride about their own capacities. Children's own stories that have been mailed to other countries have made the children curious about the other country and eager to know more about the foreign culture. Children with vulnerable life experiences and living in orphanages have been given a new imaginative possibility to tell about their problems by using symbols and in personal, self-made fairy tales. Children who get used to tell own narratives also learn to demand for attention and participation. Children also learn to read and write during the storycrafting process. (Karlsson 2000.)

Storycrafting method can be used:

- As an interview –method
- As a therapeutic –method
- As a method for documentation
- As a write- and reading –method
- To handle with many problems, like speech disabilities, insulting treatment, physical and psychic illness
- To make persons co-operate in groups and to avoid enhance
- To improve co-operation between adults and children
- To change working practises towards more client-centred habits.

STORYCRAFTING IN PRACTICE

You can use the Storycrafting method in practice:

- With one person or in groups;
- At home or outside;
- In parental advice;
- In day-care settings;
- In school;
- In therapy;
- In special education;
- In social-work and in adult education.

Adults often find it difficult to understand the way children think. The world of children with its richness of images does not always coincide with that of reason-based adults. A grown-up often listens to a child in adult's own terms.

In my opinion there is a gap between children and adults and this gap gives rise to many misunderstandings. In order to momentarily comprehend things from the children's point of view, we have to become more sensitive and listen to them without prejudice. The traditional methods that focus on children's developmental stages or on the problems of the individual have often proved insufficient in practice. The complications that affect the whole community are often forgotten when the difficulties are examined simply as the children's problems. Traditional individual methods, tests and tasks designed to evaluate performance and abilities, can make the child feel guilty which affects the self-esteem that becomes dominated by the vicious circle: - I am bad because I can't learn and since I won't learn I'm bad.

The most important thing in dialogues is to catch the meaning of the situation and the intentions of the other. Oftentimes the situation loses its meaningfulness from the child's perspective because the adults ask the children about things they already know about. This is why the children in some way have to be told, that "Everyone has their own way of thinking. I am interested in how you think. Since I am the other person I cannot know your way of thinking." Once a child said to me with a surprised expression: "You mean you are interested in what I'm thinking?" The aim of the situation in storycrafting is clearly explained to the child. The adult will not evaluate the child's response by characterising it right or wrong, but tell that he or she expects to hear something that this particular child is thinking. There are advantages allowing the children tell their own stories or draw pictures. Children feel that the adult is interested in what they draw and say. Children feel that the adult does not expect a ready answer but that they have

permission to think of one. The adult and the children have time to get acquainted with each other. The child can follow up how spoken language is turned into written language. Inhibited children sometimes need encouragement or hints; "What would you prefer to draw?" "Would you make a boy's or a girl's story?" etc. If a child has a totally negative attitude towards telling a story you have to wait for an other opportunity to storycrafting. Sometimes children have to be restrained if there does not seem to be an end to the story. One way is to tell the child that one piece of paper is all we have strength for and that the story has to end when the sheet is full. Here is an example of a story told by a 9-year-old boy to the school psychologist in January 1986 (Riihelä 1991).

Petteri's story

The sun shines in the sky.
The birds sing and the crickets play
and it's a nice summer's day.
Flowers are flowering and it's summer at last.
Winter is far behind.
And the grass is green.
The ant has a little nest at the foot of the tree.
Fish swim around in the water.
Gulls fly around in the sky.
The little furry balls are dandelions.
Fish jump now and then.
The little fisherman does not catch any fish whatever he does.
Big fish chase the smaller fish.
The little bird has a nest on the rock.
A little motor boat casts fishing nets.
The magpie has a nest in a green tree.
A little squirrel runs across the green.
Autumn comes again.
Mushrooms begin to grow
and the downpours come.
Gradually rain turns into sleet.
Finally winter comes.
Children play excitedly.
Trees have already dropped their leaves.
Children have to keep going inside.

The Storycrafting method is based on children's viewpoint. Their own thoughts become heard, documented and the source for activities. For many children telling stories is great fun and a natural way to express themselves. In the Storycrafting situations things take place on children's terms. Their reactions and wishes mould the situation; for example no child is forced to take part. Nobody is forced to tell stories, and the adult writes down only what the child approves. Permission to use the story is obtained from the child and his/her guardian; names are published only with the permission of the child and the parent.

STORYCRAFTING IN THE STORYRIDE PROJECT

The Storycrafting method has been used most extensive in the Storyride network project coordinated by Finnish National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health

(Stakes). The project started in 1995 on collaboration with 23 Finnish municipalities and professionals in social and health care, parishes, individual day care centres and family day care units and other institutions. The method for Storycrafting was further developed in this network in order to record children's stories and to construction of their own network of stories. The focus of the project was, on the one hand, the paradigm dilemma, which occurs between generations, children and adults, in society, in the sciences, in children's institutions, and in cultural contexts. On the other hand, the focus was on the stories that children told to adults and their peers, the meaning adults attribute to these stories, the position of children's independent initiatives in everyday life in child services and in storytelling culture in general.

Today the collaboration continues with universities, colleges, day care centres and cultural organisations in Nordic countries. The Nordic Council of Ministers have supported the project. In addition, in 1999, the Storycrafting method was accepted as a preferable therapeutic method in the European Network on promoting Mental Health for 0 – 6-year-old children.

Target group of the project

Storyride project is mainly implemented in local, regional and national networks in five Nordic countries. In 1996 the project became a network for children and adults in other Nordic countries. In 1997 England and Greece joined to the network, and in 1998 did Estonia. The follow up of the project was carried in 1995-1997, but the activities continue and will spread ahead. The project also involves parents, primary health care nurses, teachers, child carers and other professionals in contact with children. In Finland several thousands professionals have participated in the training programs. The settings for the implementation of the project have been manifold. The method have been used e.g. in children's own homes with their parents and grandparents, in crèches, clinical settings, nursery schools and pre-school settings. Almost every room and space is appropriate for the method: the sandbox, hall floor, playground, forest outing, story room, etc.

Project objectives

Main objective of the project has been to create children's own network by creating direct contacts between children. The children are given the opportunities to produce their own culture, which is documented and published. In addition children's thoughts and initiatives are listened to and taken seriously. Children play an influential role and can concentrate on matters they regard as important. Another objective is to prevent problems (children at risk) and create possibilities to intervention through positive action.

The project also includes a specific developmental tool for changing working habits. The aim is to find new ways of listening to children. By listening to children professionals get to know in a personal way the children with whom they are working with. Another aim is to create means to include children in the planning and implementation of activities. The project tries to open the eyes and ears of the adult towards the individual child and create a deeper understanding of childhood and children.

When a child or a group of children have told a story of their own choice it will be sent to another group of children in a different day care centre, school, orphanage etc. in the own country or abroad. There the story mail is read and the new listeners tell their own response which is then sent back to the original group. Thus the story mail chain goes on its way. Storycrafting and the network have opened up possibilities to use creative methods in day care centres, schools and other institutions. Children are also involved in working in groups when they tell stories and listen to other children's stories. Children experience how their own stories and spoken language is transformed into letters and/or published texts. The communicative

function of language attains a personal meaning when children listen to their own stories and those stories of other children being read out loud. Children get their opportunity to hear other children's thoughts from different parts of their own country and abroad.

The professionals participating the Storyride have meetings with other Storycrafting educators to exchange their experiences. The project also involves counselling. Storycrafting educators encourage others in their area to join in the project. Storycrafting educators form their own networks maintaining co-operation with various parties, e.g. library and hospitals. This sort of collaboration has created joint responsibility for the implementation of the project.

Evaluation of the project

The Storycrafting method and the Storyride project are based on the evidence of latest scientific child research about the marginal position of children in the community and their inaudibility in child institutions (e.g. Riihelä 1989, 1991, 1996, 2000, Karlsson 1999, 2000, James & Prout 1990, Bruner & Haste 1990/1996, Qvortrup 1994, Corsaro 1997, Alanen 1992). Recent research on learning, education and prevention is also applied as a supporting framework (e.g. Karlsson & Riihelä 1991, Rauste-v.Wright 1999, Bruner 1996, Cole 1996).

In spring 1995, interviews took place with professionals in pre-school and early education. These professionals were from network of 13 early education development centres in the so-called Somersault Ride project. These interviews showed that, amongst other things, they wanted to develop ways to listen to children in educational activities, as well as in other work with children. In addition, there was a search for some kind of common thread through all the development centres' activities. They wanted methods which would allow children to spontaneously express their thoughts and ideas as part of their daily routines in day care centres, pre-school and early education, and also in the daily planning activities. In addition, there was a desire for some co-operation with families.

To satisfy these hopes and expectations, we began to give training in the Storycrafting method and to build up the Storyride network. From the research point of view, also the story project was taken as a measure of quality: the plan was to observe how the participating adults' relationship to their own work would change during these two years. The children would be able to conduct conversation within the framework of their own network. At the same time a concrete forum for discussion was created for the personnel.

At a meeting of the participants the Storycrafting idea was received with comments like the following: "Good, a concrete tool. This is just what is wanted." "An excellent way to develop your own work." "Just great when the content in the network comes from the children. The focus is child-centred."

The opinions of the children's parents concerning Storycrafting and the project was also taken into account and their permission was obtained for their children's participation. Liisa Karlsson (1999, 2000) has been the main researcher on the Storyride project. The research included qualitative and quantitative evaluation on the process and effects. The method has shown considerable positive results and as a consequence

The children's own initiatives and thoughts are now heard and seen in an other way than earlier. The children's self-confidence, self-knowledge and self-esteem have increased.

The children have become courageous enough to be spontaneous and to take the initiative.

The children and adults have been pleased with and enjoyed the activity.

The group spirit has increased (Storycrafting is a fast and efficient tool for getting acquainted).

The staffs' attitudes and practices have become more observable to the child.

The personnel have begun to appreciate children's thoughts and become more sensitive to listening to the children.

Activities are developed on the basis of children's ideas and with the children. The adults' ability to move into conversation with children has improved. Using the method has had preventive effects and has also dealt with existing problems.

Children are activated e.g. children with dysphasia diagnosis have begun to use significantly more speech and to communicate more (Kemppainen 2001). In addition, story-crafting is as positive way to talk about difficult matters, e.g. discussions about custody have been started with a story chosen and told by the child. Many professional groups in seven countries have experienced the method as being suitable for their own work.

There are certain features of the project that are primarily responsible for the success of this project. One feature is that the simple, easy and inexpensive method is used over a prolonged period. In addition to the training of story adults, the costs consist of pen, paper and possibly postal charges and an envelope. The starting point of the method is the same, but its further development is open to changes depending on the participants and the context of the situation. Although the method is apparently easy, it nevertheless requires that the adults should be trained / initiated and they should understand the idea. This avoids incorrect application, such as interpretation or correction of stories or laughing at "silly stories". One important feature of the project is that the professionals have contacts and discussions with each other.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE STORYCRAFTING METHOD

The traditional paradigm in child research and in practice with children leads to many misunderstandings. But assuming that the knowledge is dynamic leads also to an acceptance of children's knowledge. The method focuses on a democratic dialog between the child and the adult, with two sequences in stead of three, which is typical for institutional settings (Riihelä 1996). In a cultural aspect it could be observed, that it is not only the adults who produce culture. Children do it as well and in their own way, which in special occasions differs from adult's culture. Real listening includes sharing of thoughts, experiences and feelings. Children need to be seen and heard and to have opportunities for participation.

The child has traditionally been considered inferior to the adult. A child has to "grow up" in order to be big enough to understand for example the intentions of other people. The adult is the one that knows. It is difficult to break this underestimating pattern according to children. The knowledge that they already possess is often ignored. This becomes a problem for many children to such an extent that they start feeling stupid and ignorant. They feel they will never learn. The fact that the words and the concepts used by children and those used by the educators differ so much leads to misunderstandings and cause major problems. This can result in a more or less conscious power struggle about who is right and who is wrong. Children should have the opportunity to use the knowledge they have already acquired in a planned and conscious way in new situations. Children's thinking contains, at a very early age the structure of the logic that forms the base in adults' thinking. The ability to think, however, develops differently in people. Through thought, notions are combined with observations and experiences into multifaceted constructions. Talking about own experiences are important part of this process. Thought and action are linked with each other.

It has traditionally been thought that real theoretical thinking is possible only after puberty. Traces of independent theoretical thinking can, however, be found much earlier. As children learn to speak during their second year, they have already used a vast number of theoretical concepts when learning to construct sentences from words and fitting them into coherent and relevant interaction. But even much earlier, children interpret people's expressions, voice tone and body language and draw their own conclusions. Children learn very early to understand what others want and they apply this knowledge to their own behaviour. Superficially it appears that the child is simply imitating others but nobody could manage to copy everything

that comes. Children independently select, from the wide range of alternatives, what they want to apply to their own activities.

Many problems occur in the interaction between child and adults, when adults ask questions and children have to answer them. The children make efforts to guess the adult's aims, to do things correctly, to give the kind of answer they presumed that the adult wants. Many children were suspicious of the interview (in my study about the time concept and co-operative learning, in Riihelä 1989). "Why do you ask me that when you know it yourself?" The children gave answers based on what they felt about the question and the situation in hand. If a question is designed in such a way that it only had one correct answer, the adults with their facial expressions gives hints to the children about which direction to go in for the correct answer. In these situations the children's answers are more an indication of social sensitivity than the child's own thoughts.

The question of knowledge is broad. We have a lot of knowledge about children and childhood. Adults sort these knowledge and place parts of it in different "boxes". One part is our own individual childhood experience, which is often found to be too subjective to be useful in general terms. Other parts could be about one's own children, about the neighbour's children, about child development theories, about children's lives in Majority or Minority countries. Some part of this knowledge is expressed in written texts, but most of it is attained in everyday life, by thinking, speaking, listening, and by sharing experiences. The latter kind of knowledge belongs to the spoken languages. Life is firstly experienced in a spoken language. Later on it can be reflected in written texts.

I'll give you an example from the Storyride project. A five-year-old boy, named John, loves to tell stories to his teacher, who is a good listener. She writes the stories down, reads them aloud, and gives John the possibility to correct them. The stories are born in companionship, in the shared world of telling and retelling. These stories have turned out to be different from one another. There seems to be an endless diversity in the way you can express yourself using stories. And this diversity is as wide in the stories of small children as in those of older.

But to get back to John, he is so interested in Storycrafting that he makes approximately ten stories per day. In only two years John have told over 700 different stories. Comparing John's 700 stories with what we know from developmental psychology about the stages and skills of 5- and 6-year-old children, or about the optimal vocabulary of children at this age, we will have two pieces of knowledge about John which are impossible to join together. General knowledge about 5 to 6-year-olds gives a very tame impression of John's abilities compared to what he is capable of telling about himself through his own stories. Theories and facts about human development in general are in deep contrast with people's own ways of looking at their lives.

The profundity of the spoken language opens wide vistas into the variety of shared experiences in human life. This story from the Storycrafting video, told by Niko 6 years, is a good example of the many ways children combine together issues that the adults don't associate together. In addition, the main characters in the story can move very fast and in a surprising way from one place to another. " ... Bopman drank electric coffee ... Mökelö had some tea and Bopman electric tea." And suddenly: "They decided to go skating and aeroplaning and fly to America."

"Mökelö was in the forest. He met Bopman there. They started to collect mushrooms into the rucksack. They decided to go skating and aeroplaning and fly to America. It's winter there. They made a snowman. – Don't then laugh at me! Then they went to the swimming pool – and to the shop to buy popcorn, sweeties, milk and coffee, and Bopman drank electric coffee. They wanted to go to the florist, too, after which they went aeroplaning to Europe.

It was raining in Europe, and they left for home. At home Mökelö had some tea and Bopman electric tea. The end!"

Perhaps spoken language and shared experiences are the main path to understanding human behaviour. I would like to underline the importance of cultural psychology in understanding of childhood (see Bruner 1996). The difficulty in speaking about culture in the psychological sense is that there are so many cultures: not only nations, or the groups within nations, but even every family has its own culture and in the family every member belongs also to other cultures. There are many cultures that we do not know yet. The vast material of children's own stories shows that we have neglected one kind of literary culture: children's own story-literature. One reason for this neglect is found in how we define teaching and learning, upbringing and education.

There is widespread agreement that teaching is to "give" skills and knowledge and learning is to receive them. We need a paradigm shift of 180° degrees. To illustrate what happens when you shift the view in the opposite direction I will give an example from another field. 500 years ago there was a well-known conformity about the position of the Earth and the Sun. Almost everybody knew that the Sun circles the Earth. But Galileo made meticulous calculations about the movements of the planets in the sky and he proved, as we know, the opposite. Today it is still difficult to believe in Galileo's arguments, because every evening you can see with your own eyes that the sun sets, circles around the Earth and comes back at the opposite side of the horizon the next morning. There will be a similar paradigm shift regarding the relationship between adults and children, between teaching and learning. I will say that we got to know from the experiences of the Storycrafting method that the function of teaching and learning is probably the opposite of the traditional understanding. Telling one's own stories seems to be a way of teaching. Children teach teachers and other children to listen, to be sensitive to the thoughts and feelings of the storyteller. Children teach adults to share the very moment the child has decided to express. The teacher will know something about the child or the group of children that is not yet written in any theory or in any curriculum. And the teacher is in fact learning. He who has to teach should sit down to learn, and he who has to learn should stand up to teach in order to learn and get a deeper understanding of the subject.

Children's culture of Storycrafting as an agent of change in intergenerational discourse

The stories told by children are traditionally treated as an indication of how they, the children, are getting on in their personal development, and how they develop their skills in handling words and concepts in the "right" way. A paradigm shift is also necessary to understand children's own storytelling culture as a part of the field of human culture, which is created by people of all ages, genders, and cultures. Children's own culture has long been hidden, and the aim here is to achieve for it a legitimate space in the arena of human interaction and culture. The generation problem has similar features to the gender question. Not until women themselves started to give their own meanings to, for example, historical and linguistic questions did the differences and similarities between the genders become visible (Bogdan-Biklen 1992). There was a shift in both focus and method of the research. However, children will never be as interested in academic investigation as men and women, so we have to be conscious that there is no chance of obtaining the perspectives of children in "pure" forms.

According to Peter Moss' analysis (1997, p. 23), seeking for an alternative paradigm for understanding work with small children means that the central question deals with diversity and democracy. Using the paradigm of diversity, limited participation will be replaced by broad access to the process of definition, power concentration will give way to power distribution, few voices will make way for many, and an assumption of rational objectivity will be

challenged by recognition of the essential subjectivity of the process (Pence & McCallum, 1994).

Some theoretical models have been set out in investigations (Nelson 1986, Corsaro 1997) which observe children's democratic and subjective position both in the context of research and in practice. Key concepts to be used are the collective sharing of positive power, and the concepts of children's personal culture and their personal views on the environment in child services. We intend to seek ways to identify the conditions that permit children to act in a democratic intergenerational situation and to be understood in their own way.

The open process of the Storycrafting methods gives space for children's independent initiatives. Children's own stories, from this viewpoint, have been largely ignored in previous investigations. We speak of children's culture, but we do not mean the culture created by the children themselves. Additionally, children's institutions are maintained for children, but children's spontaneous striving to build their own meanings, stories, and activities, has been largely unquestioned. Children's viewpoints have received little attention up till now.

Interaction that includes Storycrafting and documentation still does not, in itself, create the potential for achieving fresh diversity and democracy in the relationship between generations. Professionally-created, official, institutionalised scripts reduce children's rights to act spontaneously as subjects in their own daily lives, alongside adults and their culture (Riihelä 1996, 73). Children are treated as the target of examination or professional work in service provision. In fact the basis of reciprocal dialogue in social interaction imply sensitivity to listen, and a readiness to take part in developing scripts which are individual and collaborative, within peer groups, and between generations. Elements in the formation of the children's subject position include the view of children as active individuals guiding their own culture, the view of knowledge as a dynamic process. At the root of these viewpoints are for the counterparts listening for one another's expectations, intentions, and producing of a joint script.

The method of Storycrafting (in Finnish: "saduttaa", in Swedish: "sagotera") could be a joyful bridge across not only the gaps between teachers and pupils, but also across the gap between cultures and between everyday life and sciences. Heraklit assumed 2500 years ago that you are able to descend into the same river only once. Life is like a stream. Some of the processes in life are translated into stories. And the spoken stories are all different. Possibly the heart of the quality in childhood services is not to be found in individual skills and knowledge, but between people in suddenly passing moments of collectively told narratives.

Children need the freedom to play, investigate and try, make mistakes and correct them and choose where and with whom to apply their curiosity, intellect and emotions without anybody synchronising or dimensioning their work in a random manner. At the same time, however, children are able to participate in broad and active interaction.

Static versus dynamic notion of knowledge

In the past it was sufficient, as a measure of learning, to know parts of holy texts by heart and to be able to read passably. Learning was based on authority and learning by heart. The notion of knowledge skills has become more complex and current teaching is often even accused of excessive theoretical and knowledge emphasis. Demands for reducing the amount of knowledge and increasing practicality have been expressed. Nevertheless, knowledge as well as emotion and action are important. When children act happily while learning new things, the amount of knowledge increases rather than decreases. One could also think that knowledge in itself is not meaningful but what is important is to know how knowledge is be constructed. (See Karlsson & Riihelä 1991.)

A static notion of knowledge leads to a passive attitude to knowledge. It is considered to be an unchanging unit of information that the learner simply receives. This notion has been challenged by a new demand to develop education and teaching in a way that would be based on a different kind of idea, a dynamic notion of knowledge. Static knowledge is either

right or wrong. Facts and classifications are emphasised in the learning. The static notion of knowledge does not take account of the life conditions of the learner. The child is given a few opportunities to apply the new knowledge to his or her own life. The learning process becomes a superficial cramming of details which rarely leads to a mastery of the whole and thinking is limited to learning from memory.

The static notion of knowledge has been important for the transfer of the culture. The static notion of knowledge is also subordinating. It lacks criticality and its reliability is not questioned. Static does signify durability, something that is lasting and at rest. In the teaching of mathematics for instance, there is seldom paid enough attention to the fact that numbers represent the relationship between a measure and what is being measured. One can most easily remember the abstract meaning of numbers. "Two times two is four, is it not? If the reader is certain that this is an absolute, incontestable truth, he will never become a good mathematician but in the best case a good counter... Truth is absolute only when you multiply (or add) abstract units (such as written symbols) or objects that are more or less identical: building blocks, balls or other 'absolutely hard' impermeable pieces. Let us combine two lots of two drops of water. Whatever the result is, it will hardly be four. Maybe it will be one drop of water, maybe 44 small pearls of water. Two times two is four only provided that what is being multiplied consists of such particles of material that will not change as a result of this operation.... The incompatibility between calculated and actual numbers is a sign to a physicist of some previously unknown phenomenon occurring during the experiment which, through its unanticipated nature, has made the calculations null and void." (Iljenkov 1984.)

According to the dynamic notion of knowledge, knowledge is correct only in certain circumstances. Dynamic does in fact signify something based on action, something vigorous that functions through its own energy. Knowledge is seen as relative. Our knowledge changes and develops. Earlier theories are refuted or adjusted until it is shown that a new theory is only one certain point of view of whatever is being researched. The development of science means an increase in the scientific image of the world. Galileo's conception of the world was better than that of Ptolemy simply because it covers a wider spectrum.

Every person, child or adult applies the knowledge he or she has constructed. A certain statement is truthful when looked upon and justified from a certain angle. A lie or a misconception is borne from a different angle than a correct piece of information. Angles vary ad infinitum and justifications may often seem insufficient and even incorrect to another person. When a child claims that night arrives when the sun sets into a cloud, it is consistent with the observation that, during a sunny day, there are clouds on the horizon behind which the sun disappears in the evening. This observation by a child is very important to him or herself as well as to others since the mode of observation illuminates a certain angle of events to do with the sunset. When another child offers another idea of how night begins, a debate might follow and possibly also the need for further study. This is an example in which case children are given the opportunity to deal with a subject from their own starting points while exploiting their own experiences. Dynamic knowledge evolves according to the user and is pertinent to the situation in which the knowledge is being used. Regularities in change will be studied, theories formed and applied. In other words, there is an on-going quest for the correlation between the different bits of knowledge.

Unexpected points of view often crop up in children's comments, as illustrated by children's stories heard and collected by Kornei Chukovsky (1975):

" - Now the horse has put its tail on and is going out for a walk. Mother hears this and interrupts: - You can't remove a horse's tail and put it back on again. It grows out of the horse. The daughter answers: - You are stupid mother, I'm playing!"

" - I'm losing my patience with you, mother shouted nervously. - It doesn't matter, I'm good at finding things that have been lost, answered the lively boy."

" - Where have you come from? the mother asks her son. - Why do you ask that, you gave birth to me yourself."

A dynamic conception of knowledge is unequivocally associated with skills, emotions, equality, imagination and reflection. We should try to find such structures of knowledge that would help us to understand the changing world.

Dynamic knowledge is adopted through the processing of thinking. Experience and reasoning take turns. Culture is transferred and adapted to fulfil the needs of the following generation. Knowledge is accentuated through active search. Creative learning and thinking skills becomes the aims of education and teaching.

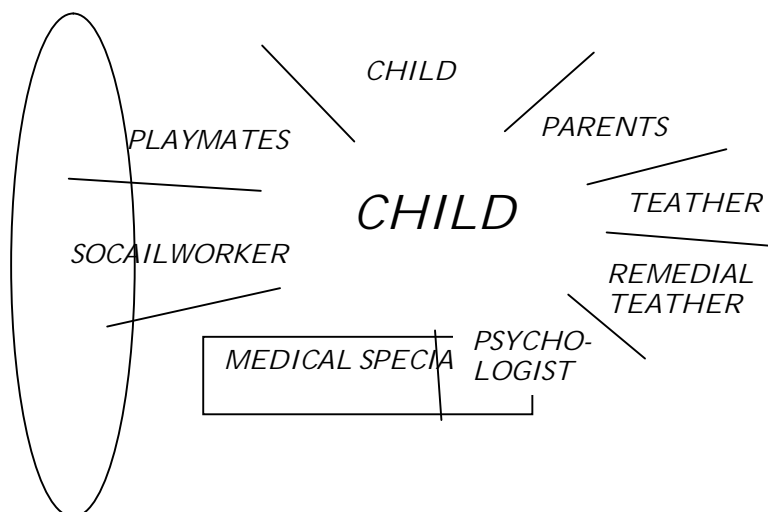
Today the interest in context-based research is increasing, but there are great difficulties in comprehending the child's world. When we try to gain insight into children's and adults' shared social activities through research and written reports, what invariably remain concealed are the children's own experiences and their orally expressed knowledge of particular situations.

This problem directs us to one of the main problems in child research, namely to the application of theoretical orientations that does not understand children as subjects, but objects of adults' activities. Objectification has a long tradition which emphasises general, written and context-free knowledge at the expense of local, oral and empirical (Toulmin 1999). Using traditional concepts of knowledge prevents particularly children's participation in both the production of research knowledge and in the organisation of practical work.

Picture 1 depicts a situation where different professionals are trying help a child, e.g. to support John in his learning problems. The focus is on John, who is set in the centre. Both John and his parents are interviewed to gain deeper understanding about the situation. Different professionals are involved to examine the situation and they all are expressing their opinions about possible solutions. In this way, John is being examined from different view points, beginning from different disciplines and theoretical backgrounds. Everybody sees John differently, and John's own opinions are just one small part of the whole totality. This collected information is used to create the strategy for solving the problems.

Figure 1.

Different points of view to children's world when the child is in the centre



The focus becomes different when the child is not in the centre anymore, but the question is more about the producer of the knowledge in the situation as in picture 2. The problem is approached on focusing on what knowledge and whose knowledge is used or left unused in research, education and teaching. Knowledge is taken to include not only scientific and cognitive knowledge, but also such things as experience, perception, and feeling. No matter on what age or developmental phase the person is, everybody has experiences and knowledge related to his or her own life. One can justifiably claim that even before birth and before the speech phase, children have experiences, perceptions and feelings.

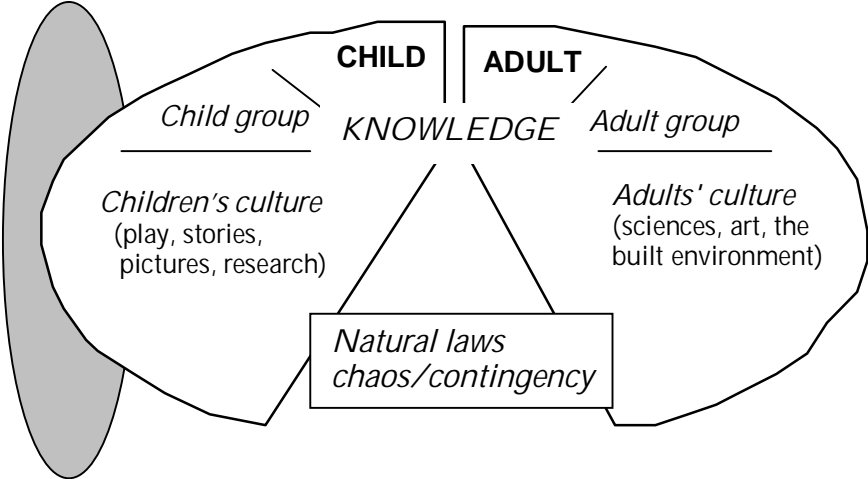
The question "What or whose knowledge is used / not used?" can be answered on the basis of many theoretical reflections and thoughts. To solve John's problem one could jointly examine the situation where the problems are visible. A certain episode, e.g. failure in mathematics class could be examined: one could investigate the learning environment, and who's experiences and knowledge is being applied in the class. How is the air in the class room, does it include a lot of carbon dioxide? Have the teacher and the children eaten enough, have they had enough rest and hysical exercise to improve their concentration and cognitive skills? Are children only doing calculations that the teacher introduces or are the problems based on children's questions and interests? Is the teacher the one who is talking in the class or are children having a dialogue with each other? Who are paying attention to John's problems? The teacher, classmates or John himself? Are there some misunderstandings between people that are related to John's problems? Does other children see Johns problem as a problem or is it only teacher's observation? Does John have problems in his perception, problems that may prevent him seeing and understanding things the similar way as the other children?

The laws of nature including chaos and change are crucial sources of human knowledge. It depends on the given situation to what extent some parts of the natural phenomenon becomes the focus of examination. Furthermore, knowledge is produced by, on the one hand, the child and the child group and on the other, by adult and the adult group. And still, both child and adult communities produce knowledge.

When research focuses on the producers of knowledge (in the broad sense), children and adults are offered the chance for a non-objectifying dialogue and the shaping of shared knowledge. In child-related research the biggest problem is to render visible and significant the knowledge of child and childhood.

Figure 2.

Different points of view to children's world, the available knowledge of the situation being in the centre



Research (Riihelä 2000) has been based on the knowledge gained through listening to children's stories. Work with children was arranged in a new way so that in the day care centre all the children were asked to tell their own stories. Their narratives and their thoughts were transcribed as such, and were used on different occasions, for instance when the adults were planning the activities with the children. That is because the children do not usually tell the story of their lives, instead they tell a story that is specific and intended for the situation at that moment. This Storycrafting method, which respects children's own knowledge and experience, has opened up a new channel of interaction, which gives the floor also to children.

Childrens' fire stories

Children of 5 – 6 years were studying fire in a child-centre (Riihelä 2000). As an example of the children's stories about fire, here is Johanna's story in picture and in words. The teacher asked every child to tell stories about the fire subject to get to know how these children handle the fire phenomenon.

Johanna's Dragon story.

"Once upon a time there was the most enormous dragon. One day it was lumbering through the forest. Then it saw a good tree – and he spat fire at it. Then the fire brigade arrived – and the fire brigade sprayed the tree with their hose. It didn't help but the dragon got angry – and set the fireman's head on fire. Nearby there was a lake and the fireman dived in there. The dragon bit the hose in two. The fireman was angry about that but the dragon didn't get angry – it just showed its teeth and went on its way."

It was interesting to follow Johanna's expression when the teacher read her story out loud to the whole group. Johanna had been heard her own story already many times. But never the less she even in the front of the video camera entered deeply into the plot. In the moment when the dragon in the story is showing its teeth, she touches her own set of teeth with her tongue. The Storycrafting method provides an open situation. There are no rules that the participants would not be aware of. The rules are also set so that either the adult or the child can follow them. The adult has specified the framework for the activity in advance. During the activity, the rules, that is the progress of the story, its plot and narrative style, are at the disposal and control of the child or the group themselves.

STORYCRAFTING - VIDEO

The children are telling their stories in finish in an ordinary institution for Early Childhood Education. These stories on the video have been collected as part of the Storyride project. The stories in this video have been later translated into English. Translations are never like the original products. In every language the words have certain sounds and variations that are impossible to translate without problems. This is particularly the case with children's own expressions in their stories.

In part one, a boy Alekski and a girl Carita told seven stories spontaneously. They probably would have continued, but the adults around them were already a bit tired. These 4-years-old children do not only create stories together in a very co-operative manner, but they

also make up a choreography with their hands to combine the words with a beautiful dance. And everything happens spontaneously, with joy and marvellous co-operation. In part two Jussi and Ville, two 4-years-old boys are drawing their stories on the paper. And after a while, the separate stories begin to communicate and a group story emerges. The teacher is documenting the narratives the boys are creating. But something seems to be disturbing Ville. He begins to repeat: No entry to my world! This expression reveals something about the situation. There was a big camera and three adults who were listening to the boys' combined drawing, telling and playing.

In part three Roosa and Oona, 4-years-old girls, can't make up any story to tell. They put their hands on their mouths with smile in their eyes. Even when the teacher tries to give them ideas, they won't tell anything. At the end, the girls leave the room. After a while Roosa is back in front of the camera with two other playmates. And immediately Roosa tells happily, that she has the opportunity to be there already for the second time. And now the story about the bunny begins.

In part four a group of 5- to 6-years-old children had homework to tell stories to their parents and the parents had to write them down to their notebooks. You can see how exciting it is for the children to let the other in the group listen to their stories. Anni is especially proud of her story, because she had written it herself. And her story was about true-life experiences, she was making pancakes following her own recipe.

Part One

Part one **HANDS TALKING**: Alekski (4-year-old boy) and Carita (4-year-old girl) are telling seven stories.

BATMAN

Then he goes down. Then he goes up. Then he goes this way. Then he lands. Then he comes here. He has a cape. Then he bounces. Boing, boing... Then he flies. Into his eye, he didn't see. They couldn't catch him. 'Cos he flew. He didn't die. He goes down again and walks and creeps. Then he walks on Batman's creeping, quietly. Then he flies.

I've seen Batman... There was a bird, and the man walked down and then came Batman. Then Batman was with the bird. Yes. Then he just flew. Then he shot full blast, and then he shot some baddies. He's bad.

- No he's not, he's good.
- He's not good, he's bad.
- He is good.

Let's tell about something else. About a lion.

About **THE LION**

The lion was walking in the shop. - Like this. He had sharp claws. He was going on tiptoe. A little lion came. And a big lion. Like this. He didn't know how to walk backwards. He turned like this. Then came such a small lion. Then came such a small one. As small as this.

Now they went to their own home. Now came a giant lion. Now comes a mummy lion, a weightlifter lion, strong.

No it didn't, no. A baby comes now. Where are mummy and daddy? It calls for its sister. The sister comes to the little one.

Sister, sister!

Well, here I am

Good morning sister.

Come and follow us

Then the lion fell down. He fell into a canyon. Then the crocodile ate the lion to death.
Not dead, he didn't die.

- He died.

- The daddy is dead, he fell from heaven.

Then Simba came.

- No he didn't, it was Simba's mummy, quickly jumped there - 'cos Simba has sharp teeth. And the daddy says:

- Simba, why did you come here?

But then the daddy lion says - "Simba let's go home". But he didn't know how to go. No, 'cos daddy wasn't with him. Yes, 'cos he died.

About THE LITTLE ELEPHANT

The little elephant was walking. Tip tap, tip tap. And then daddy came. Then a man knocked on the door.

- Knock, knock

But nobody answered. Suddenly the phone rang.

- Hello, hi, yeah

Then it put the phone down and suddenly the phone rang again. Then it fell, - look, this split like this. It was bleeding. Yes and then it died. Then suddenly on the ground:

"Simba!"

"Simba! Why did you come into my lap? I'm dead"

About THE GIRAFFE

About a giraffe. About... ... a giraffe. The giraffe is walking. The giraffe is walking. On its long legs, up. And the giraffe looks on the roof.

- Yes. Let's go onto the roof!

We want to tell about something else, too!

About THE PENGUIN

About the penguin... Crept here into the storeroom. Crept into the cellar. Then it ate some poison... Then it died. Poison...

No, me!

...of the bush, the thorny bush, - and died. And there were marks like this. It became flat like this.

Let's tell about the talking door!

About THE TALKING DOOR

It walked like this. It said: bodibadi... Then it went here under. Help, help! The door opened. A giant kicked it. Now the door shut. Bang bang, the penguin hit the door. Batman hit, bang!

Bang! Then it hit it to pieces with its fist. Like this.

- Yes

Then it drilled with a drill. Then this hit it. Then it hit it. Then it drilled. Then it sawed. Sawed with a motor machine. Then hit with a car. Then the car drove over it. Then the car stroked it. It drove like this.

- Then it said it was sorry. Sorry granny, sorry finger

About THE TEDDY BEAR

Let's tell about a teddy bear! The teddy bear walks. Walks upstairs. Then it got lost - and fell in a canyon. And walks downstairs. Then, quickly under the table. It came here to hide. And then

came a robber. It hid. It didn't find this teddy bear. Not this one either. Then nothing else. Nothing else. Then let's tell about... whisper to me Carita!

Finished? Yes!

Part Two

NO ENTRY INTO MY WORLD

Two 4 year old boys, Jussi and Ville

I did circles for the snow castle... tyres! I'm going by a car. The way goes from here to there. A roadway. The arrow started flying over there. There's a candle in the snow castle. Who will draw a candle for me here?

I will.

Where?

There.

Here?

Yes

Jussi's just doing a candle for me. Some small bug fired a shot. It was a wasp. The wasp shot straight there. There was the ghost of the snow castle. It scared me, did it scare you?

- Yeah, it was trying to catch me. I ran away so fast, it couldn't catch me. A jail, wow, I'm doing a jail here. Now I'm doing the real snow castle. Why do you do a jail there? There should be one, the jail in the snow castle, that's why I do it.

Now I'm doing the real snow castle, big. With a round tummy. I'm doing another snow castle. I'll draw on the other side. This is going to be such a big castle.

Look, Jussi how big it is!

Here's a door.

Look at the snow castle. I've drawn!

Here's door, quite good. I can't get out! I'd like to live in a snow castle. - Me too. Then I'd be trapped under it when summer came. Yes, when the snow melts. I'd come under ground. I don't want to go into the lava! I want to go up! The head comes out ...plut plut plut...

Then I wrote that there's no entry into my snow castle. Then I did that giant there. You mean the castle ghost. Yes. No entry into my snow castle, into my house.

Here's the giant.

No entry...

Look what long legs! Terribly long! I do like that, wow! Copy me, Ville! Now a bit smaller.

Here's the giant that waved. Look what kind of hand this is!

Ville, that giant waved at me. Didn't you wave at it? Yes, - even though I was scared. Then I left and it waved at me. And me, too. Bye-bye! Then after me, quickly home!

It said "Bye-bye, Jussi!" Then it farted It came... what was it? The snow cas... When I waved at it, it came straight after me. And when I waved, it came after me, I hit it. Did you hit it on the leg? Yes, and I threw it straight guess where at the wasp's nest!

Ow, that hurts, ow, ow, ow!

Jussi, look how big, quite a lot of heads! Look what kind of ears this has! Look how many heads this one has! So many. Up till there, wow! Hey, I'll do fires. Fire eyes, too. This one will shoot... I'm doing it all fire, this snow castle ghost. Hey, then it began to fire, at that candle.

No entry into my world.

I'm also writing here: "No entry into my world". It says here "No entry into my world"

No entry into my world.

No entry... 'Cos this is my world, and I can't be disturbed. Into my world no.....entry.

Now that's enough, do do, blockhead. Now I'm writing my own name here

Part Three

I CAN'T SAY

Two girls, Roosa 4 years and Oona 4 years are going to tell their story, but

When the girls are sitting quiet, the adult begun to make questions and suggestions:
I'll write down your story. What's the name of the story? You'll get the stories in your own files.
Once upon a time... will you start, Roosa? Oona, you start! Once upon a time there was.....a dog.

Roosa and Oona don't want to tell any stories, butafter a little while Roosa is back again and starts telling ...)

About the bunny!

Tell about the bunny.

"Funny, I could join in twice", says Roosa with a happy voice

Part Four

STORIES FROM HOME

The adult starts reading from the papers the children brought from home. Children's parents had used the storycrafting method as an exercise for pre-school children.

First I'll read Ilari's story. Once upon a time there was a mean ghost...

THE GHOST CASTLE

Ilari, 6 year old boy

The ghost had a prisoner in the castle. There were ten ghosts, and one was guarding the castle. There was a lot of money and it was a terrifying castle. Two blokes had got lost in the forest. The ghost took them prisoner. The ghosts had a radio, which let them know who was attacking the castle. They take prisoner all who try to attack them. One bloke's tractor had stopped, he was taken prisoner, too. A good ghost had got lost in the forest, but a spooky man caught it but the good ghost beat the spooky man and released all blokes. The mean ghost took them prisoner again, but the spooky man went through the cottage, because it was invisible.

The mean ghosts were taken prisoner. They launched a rocket. Then a vulture arrived. It knocked the good ghost to the ground but the blokes shot the vulture and cured the good ghost. Then came 13 mean blokes, but the good ghost beat them. It was shot, but they cured it again.

Then night fell. The mean ghosts went haunting but the spooky man hooted so scarily that they went to the castle to tremble. Another good ghost came and it was taken prisoner. Then came a spooky man who rescued it it was a good spooky man. All good ghosts were released. The mean ghost and its guards stayed in the castle in prison. The blokes and the good ghosts left the castle they took all the money and went to the good spooky man's ghost home.

And that was Ilari's story

My story is the last one!

Anni, do you want to read your story or should I read it?

You read it

THE STORY

Anni, 5 year old girl, reads her own story.

This is called "The Story". It's a true story! This is a true story.
I made my own pancake recipe. Then I made the mixture. P.S. It turned out .
Baaaaaad...
Yuuuuuk...
Anni has written this story herself. It was great!

Now read my story!

THE BUSY DAY

Niko, 6 year old boy

Mökelö was in the forest. He met Bopman there. They started to collect mushrooms into the rucksack. They decided to go skating and aeroplaning and fly to America. It's winter there. They made a snowman...
- Don't then laugh at me!
Then they went to the swimming pool and to the shop to buy popcorn, sweeties, milk and coffee, and Bopman drank electric coffee. They wanted to go to the florist, too, after which they went aeroplaning to Europe. It was raining in Europe, and they left for home. At home Mökelö had some tea and Bopman electric tea.
The end!"

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