



Young Children as Co-Contributors in Qualitative Research: Developing Creative Interview Methods

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Abstract

Children have the right to freedom of expression regarding topics important to them, via any communication medium (UNCRC, 1989). Conducting research *on* as opposed to *with* young children fails to fulfil their rights, promoting misconceptions that children are incapable of providing meaningful data. The start of formal education presents many challenges for young children; very little studies has involved children as active participants sharing their experiences. This co-design study aimed to produce, through involvement with young children, a creative interview package for 4–5-year-olds to discuss the challenges of starting formal education. Five individual co-design sessions, and 3 pilot interviews with young children, aged 3 to 5 years old, were explored to develop the final interview package. Photo-prompts, drawing activities, and the use of a toy puppet were explored within the sessions, collecting children's verbal feedback and recommendations, as well as the authors reflective notes. A four-stage process was developed to curate the final package; Exploration, Adaptation, Confirmation and a Pilot phase. Children in this study demonstrated their capability in providing reflective accounts of their experiences with the right interview methods. The level of detail recalled from their school experiences differed depending on the chosen method. The children demonstrated there was no 'one-size fits all' technique as each child personalised the activity towards their communication preferences (e.g., drawing over speaking). Ensuring children's voices are heard can generate research outcomes that are directly relevant to their lived experiences, ultimately leading to more meaningful and positive impacts for them.

Keywords: Active Participants; Children's Rights; Creativity