Intergenerational Solidarity, Agency, Trust In Primary School Children's Narratives During the Covid-19 Pandemic In London

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The meaning of the presentation

this presentation aims to bring to the fore the voices of children, by discussing data produced in London schools with children age 9-11

Voices of children emerging in audio-recording of classroom interactions in 4 London schools, within the Horizon 2020 project CHILD-UP, https://www.child-up.eu/project-outcomes/

Voices of children are promoted by CHILD-UP, also through focus groups. Data from FGs was discussed at a workshops supported by the Dialogue Society in London https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HPAXc4sXTw *(Farini, Baraldi, Scollan)*

Voices of Teachers → Farini, F., Scollan, A. 2022. The role of trust in the positioning of Children with Migrant Backgrounds. Reflections on Teachers' narratives from London primary schools. Equity in Education and Society, 1: 1–14.

Context of the Research

Audio-recordings of classroom activities in English schools (December 2020) after 4-weeks closures due to Covid-19 outbreaks. On return to school, teachers invited children to share stories of their experiences at home

Before further closures for a third national lockdown, 20 hours of classroom interactions were audio-recorded

Narratives were used by children to interpret and present their realities, making sense of events in a situation of uncertainty.

Context of the research

- ✓ www.child-up.eu

- ✓ MOOC: https://moodle.child-up.eu/

- ✓ Archive: https://movio.child-up.eu/

This presentation

three themes were constructed with the use of narrative analysis:

1. solidarity between children and parents, intergenerational collaboration

2. perceptions of pandemic-related uncertainty;

3. intergenerational trust and display of agency as active participation in the management of challenging situations

Children's rights, children's needs

During the management of the pandemic, an important issue has been protecting children's right to education, framed within a discourse of children's need of adults' guidance.

Whilst in recent years education has progressively included methods to support children's agency, the consideration of children as agents in education has been weakened during the pandemic. The attempt to re-establish education through distance teaching has reduced children to disembodied beings working though media, dramatically disrupting children's interpersonal relations, that is, a primary context of their agency *(Farini, F., Baraldi, C., A. Scollan. 2021. The cohesion of schools as communities in the management of COVID-19 pandemic. Reflections, narratives, fears and hopes from the voices of children in England and Italy. Journal of Dialogue Studies, 9: 120-148. Also see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HPAXc4sXTw)*

Promoting agency

However, interest for children's personal expression was not completely thrown aside in educational practices

An example was the promotion of dialogue based on teachers' facilitation of children's narratives, as recorded during CHILD-UP research in the classroom

Promotion of dialogue is promotion of agency, because dialogue is based of active and fair participation, perspective taking, empowerment of expressions which are conditions of agency

On the facilitation of personal expression as a methodology to promote dialogue, see Erasmus+ Project 'SHARMED', www.sharmed.eu; Baraldi C., Farini, F. & E. Joslyn. 2021. Promoting Children's Rights in European Schools. Intercultural Dialogue and Facilitative Pedagogy. London: Bloomsbury

children's voices

Theme 1:

Solidarity between children and parents, in form of intergenerational collaboration

Solidarity between children and parents

And then I didn't get that much help. I have a little brother in year 1. Like, he's fine, it's just that he needs my mum to help him most of the time. It was fine I had to work all by myself, and my mum can only help me a little bit it is alright, we did not want to upset each other

Solidarity between children and parents

My dad, he can't help me. Most of the time he's in a different country in the Netherlands, or he might be working from home being too busy. For example, if we don't understand a Maths question, one of the teachers will come and help us. But at home, I needed to research on Google but I do not ask him because I do not want him to feel bad

Solidarity between children and parents

my mum got a email on parent mail from Miss [name removed] saying she lets me come into school. It was on Sunday. Because my brother, he was going to school, because he doesn't really like doing online, same as me, so he went to school, so if he went, I had to go as well. And it was only me and [name removed] and [name removed] as well. Well, there was only about 8 children. I did not like it but my mum went to work and did not have to worry about me

Theme 2:

perceptions of pandemic-related uncertainty

perceptions of pandemic-related uncertainty

I found it hard since Coronavirus came because there's never been something like this since we've been alive, so since we've never had anything like this, it's hard for us because we don't know what's going on and what's gonna happen. It is hard to think about the future

perceptions of pandemic-related uncertainty

Coronavirus ruined everything. It's like, I didn't get to get fresh air, even if I played with one of my favourite games, it didn't even cheer me up. Even though my parents brought me a new game in the Easter holidays. I started playing on the PS3, but I still got upset, I like still saw images of before Coronavirus happened. Like an image of playing with my friends, an image like that. And sometimes I just went away and was staying in my dreams for five minutes, and then I just closed my game and threw the controller. It was so weird and made me angry

perceptions of pandemic-related uncertainty

It was like weird when you get up every day knowing you don't have to get ready for school, you just have to go on your computer. Doing online school was really boring because you couldn't see your friends. It was weird and not like a holiday because you had social distance everywhere

perceptions of pandemic-related uncertainty

It's just so weird not being able to socialise with people. Like since they said you can't be with your family, it was very weird going to like, let's say, Brent Cross, and seeing people like social distancing everywhere. It was really weird to see. Wearing masks so you can't see the expressions and stuff. Yeah that's hard, because you've got masks on and people are talking, you don't know if they are looking or listening to you, you can't tell what you would normally tell, it's confusing

perceptions of pandemic-related uncertainty

Coronavirus isn't only separating us from our friends but from our family. I have a cousin and they have loads of cousins and the last time I have seen any of them has been around two years now. Eid last year was very disappointing last year because I didn't get to see my cousins. I was supposed to see my cousins last year, but I have a feeling this year, Eid will be even better we will get to go to the toy shops and to we will get to go to the party

Theme 3:

display of agency as active participation in the management of family challenges

display of agency

At first, at the first quarantine, everything was online, we didn't have online meetings like Google Meetings. So we did everything by ourselves. Even my parents didn't have time to help me, so I did everything by myself. And then, as like, sometimes I wouldn't even know what to do but I felt had to teach my brothers so I did it

display of agency

Honestly, me, I don't really like online meetings. Because like, I felt like I was stuck in a prison. I have my brother, but like, he's small and he doesn't even understand me. Like I try to play with him, he doesn't understand, he goes and plays with himself and watches tv. I personally don't really like playing by myself, I really like playing with my friends at school, and I feel like I was just prisoned in my own room so I thought we could have meetings like for school and I created a google group like google classroom

display of agency

Honestly, when the first wave struck, I was like 'hmmm yay, I get to do a bit of relaxing.' But then online work hit me like a truck. Because I was just thinking, I'm gonna be honest, I wasn't expecting it, I was just like 'I'm gonna sit around, maybe look at some stuff once in a while, do some work, do some spelling, keep myself educated' but I learned to use the computer to do actual hard homework and then submit it onto Google Classroom, and if we wanted to, we could post it on the stream, and people could read it if they want. So I got to do that

conclusion

- The management of the pandemic, and in particular the intersection between online schooling and parents' work commitments created conditions for inter-generational solidarity

- Clear perception of uncertainty but also preparedness and trust in the possibility to play an agentic role in its management

- The promotion of children's agency as authorship of narratives allowed the observation of more examples children's agency

Thank you!

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