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‘If you don’t understand this don’t worry, for the rest of you I will go on’: Deconstructing children’s opportunity to participate in the classroom community of practice

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Drawing to differentiate: The effects of colour
F. SPENSLIE, S. McGINLEY & C. MORGENSTERN, Oxford University.
Sitton and Light's (1992) drawing differentiation tasks (draw a man, woman, boy & girl) was presented to 60 four- to six-year-old children, to complete either with a black pen or with 10 coloured pens (repeated measures). Differentiation by height was found in the black pen condition, comparable to Sitton and Light's findings, but not in the coloured pen condition where the additional cognitive load also led to a decrement in the number of features produced. In contrast, copying doll's between subjects, 60 four- to six-year-old children) found that coloured pens facilitated copying performance. Children produced greater differentiation by salient features (e.g. skirts), and differentiated by height with coloured pens, but not in the black pen condition. In this case the colours seemed to relieve the problem of translation into monochrome, by providing a direct representational translation that was simpler than shape.
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If you don’t understand this don’t worry, for the rest of you I will go on:

Deconstructing children's opportunity to participate in the classroom
community of practice
H. STIVAROS, J. TOBBELL & M. HARDMAN, Leeds Metropolitan University.
Learning is a fundamental concern within Western societies as demonstrated through the development of schooling systems and National Curriculums, both of which strive to charge of and advance children's learning. Current Government ideologies and classroom practices implicitly assume a constructivist leaning processes and unproblematic individual competence despite acknowledgement by many (both theorists, of the constructive and interactive nature of children's learning. According to the Community of Practice formulation, learning is characterised as participation in the practices of the environment. Drawing on the ethnographic research of one of the authors, who explores the quotidian learning experiences of year six children, this paper illustrates the role of the teacher as gatekeeper to pupils' learning. It is argued that teachers classroom practices serve to dictate pupils' opportunities for learning. This is a powerful supposition in and terms of children's educational development, suggests teachers and schools need to ensure access to participation levels of opportunity.
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Singing with infants: Balancing control with collaboration
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This paper presents the second of a two-part study exploring mothers' attitudes towards singing to their infants in daily caring routines. The first part was a survey of 104 mothers' attitudes to singing. The second part involved recordings of video-recordings of mothers interacting with infants between four and ten months old. Recordings were made in naturalistic settings (at home or in an equivalent venue) of 16 mother-infant pairs, followed by immediate playback and recall, to obtain mothers' comments on their infants' responses and their own feelings. These comments are presented along with transcriptions of the video recordings. Mothers' comments were classified into six types of singing into the video vignettes. Detailed sequential analysis of one vignette showed elements of collaboration across different features of the video recording process. The two recording processes complement each other and reveal insights into these intimate musical exchanges. The results suggest that mothers' singing is a very varied activity, providing an important part of emotional interaction, with both positively and negatively affective states and on their own needs to communicate.
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Reconceptualising learning: Legitimate participation in communities of practice, explaining transition from primary to secondary school
J. TOBBELL, Leeds Metropolitan University.
The structural and pedagogical differences between primary and secondary school have been listed in a number of research studies. In particular, identified as one of the reasons for the difficult process of transition. However, to date these differences have been largely studied (e.g. original ORA study and the follow-up 20 years on) and subsequent assumptions made about why they present difficulties. In this paper I will discuss a six-month research project which followed 55 children from primary to secondary schools. The outcomes demonstrated that primary and secondary schools constitute two cultures. Different notions of smooth transitions are rendered an impossible dream. I will use the learning as participation literature to demonstrate how the learning and performance are embedded in the wider practices of the school so that, in order to succeed, children need to reevaluate and forget primary practices and involve themselves in a set of new procedures, which a significant proportion of problems and problems because of the shift in emotional and motivational factors ensuing to the transition. I will use the data to challenge traditional notions of learning and to suggest how new curricular practices can address transition problems.
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A connectionist approach to teaching rhythm notation to three- to four-year-old pre-school children
Y. TOMMIS & D.M.A. FAZEY, University of Bangor.
In many countries, including Britain and the USA, rhythm notation is traditionally taught utilising the mathematical concepts to represent note values (e.g. one semibreve equals four crotchets). The purpose of this study was to investigate whether it was possible for young children to learn to perform from conventional rhythm notation without being taught such rules. Here the children were simply exposed to rhythmic phrases along with their correct performance. They were able to accurately perform previously unseen phrases comprised of the learned note values (semibreves, minimis, crotchets and quavers). The children (n=10) received a pre-test, 20-10 minute intervention period followed by post-test. Pre- to post-test gains were significant (p<0.001). Scores on a re-test administered seven weeks later were not significantly different from post-test scores (p>0.05).
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Agency: Measuring selfhood in toddlers' social actions
L. VITTORINI & A. CHADDOCK, University of Durham.
This paper presents a new measure of selfhood in two-year-olds - interpersonal agency - that quantifies the ability to act effectively upon the self's goals with reference to the social world. Using social play and interpersonal conflict as areas of analysis, individual differences in interpersonal agency among toddlers are described and exemplified. It will be shown that children as young as two years of age vary quite widely in their ability or willingness to affect the social environment, that this variation is consistent across a range of interactive situations, that it is predicted by security of attachment such that securely attached children are more agentic than their insecure peers. Interactional theories of self-development place a great deal of emphasis on the role of the child in the child's history of social interaction. Hence, in an exploration of potential determinants, aspects of maternal interaction that may promote interpersonal agency in toddlers will be highlighted, using videotaped examples.
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Academic achievement and social functioning of children with and without learning difficulties
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A academic achievement and social functioning of children with learning difficulties (LD), achieving (LA), and high achieving (HA) children was examined. The children were seven- to 12-years-old (n=254, including 30 children without LD were assigned to the LA or HA category on the basis of attainment scores on exams for Mathematics and English. Sociometric and behavioural scores were collected for each child. Findings indicated positive correlations between academic attainment and positive social behaviours; and negative correlations with academic attainment and negative social behaviours. Behavioural attributes accounted for greater variance in social preference than in academic achievement. HA children scored higher on social preference and positive behaviours than LA and ID children. Only help-seeking behaviour discriminated between ID and LA groups - children with ID scoring significantly higher. These findings indicate a relationship between social adjustment and academic achievement, and that intervention strategies need to target social relationship difficulties in LD children as well as children with ID.
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He takes after his father: Children's reasoning about parent-offspring and sibling resemblance
The study is part of a three-year longitudinal project funded by the Welcome Trust examining the development of children's intuitive inheritance concepts. It reports cross-sectional comparisons on a mother-child task. Children from four age cohorts (four, seven, 10 and 14 years; n=180) were interviewed individually using a forced-choice procedure about the inheritance of three different feature types (physical characteristics, personality traits and disabilities). They were presented with phenotypes of the biological mother and father exhibiting variation in the feature at issue. Children were asked to select the most likely offspring out of four alternatives same feature as the mother, same feature as the father, combined features of mother and father, neither parental feature. Children then made judgements about trait inheritance. For both, the rulings the child was required to provide an explanation of inheritance. The results showed significant age and feature differences in children's beliefs regarding the inheritance characteristics. Although younger children have a general understanding of parent-offspring resemblance, older children develop more complex conceptions of inheritance which include a recognition of multiple sources of inheritance, awareness of genes and genetic uncertainty.
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Emotion recognition by children with Down's syndrome: Effects of varying emotion on label and expression intensity
Socio-cognitive ability is often thought to be a relative strength amongst those with Down's syndrome (DS). However, recent work suggests that some children with DS may experience difficulties with certain aspects of social cognition, including recognition of specific facial expressions of emotion. The study to be reported used a photo matching task to further explore recognition emotion ability amongst children with DS (n=28), and compared DS performance with that of children with non-specific intellectual disabilities (n=25) and typically developing children (n=28) matched on cognitive function. Four conditions (regular vs exaggerated emotions, emotion labelling vs generic task instructions) were used in an attempt to test the extent to which emotion recognition task difficulties in DS relate to perceptual aspects of facial expression or to