

Esther Mercado, Complutense University of Madrid, [emercado@ucm.es](mailto:emercado@ucm.es); Wendy Eerdeken, Arteveldehogeschool, [wendy.eerdeken@arteveldehs.be](mailto:wendy.eerdeken@arteveldehs.be); Inger Sofie Dahlø Husby, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, [inger.s.husby@ntnu.no](mailto:inger.s.husby@ntnu.no); Karen Winter, Queen's University Belfast, [k.winter@qub.ac.uk](mailto:k.winter@qub.ac.uk)

# Leapfrogging through tools and methods: Promotion of Child Participation in International Welfare systems

## Background and purpose

Child participation, and the defense and promotion of children's rights have become globally important topics of discussion since the passing of the United Nations **Convention on the Rights of the Child** (UNCRC). This recognition becomes even more relevant as it is one of the fundamental principles of children's rights within the framework of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. However, cultural patterns, the "adult-centric" view and the lack of tradition in recognizing a prominent social role for children and young people made this issue one of the most significant challenges. This poster analyses the tools and methods used by professionals of four countries (Belgium, Northern Ireland, Norway and Spain).

## Findings

Studies show that there is a need to define organized practices in order to promote children's participatory processes. **Narrative and mapping tools** are used. **Activity-based communication and collaboration** can make it easier for children to "talk" and share experiences, including digital resources.



The **dialogical conversation method** (DCM) is a very promising example of the dialogic way of talking together (example: Duplo methodology, Authors).

## Method

Qualitative research approach based on **literature review**. Materials, tools and techniques used in the promotion of children's participation and decision-making were identified through a structured search in both national and international databases in addition to the collection of potential tools from project partners. A structured computer search was carried out using a specific selection criteria and defining our research strategy (see Figure 1).



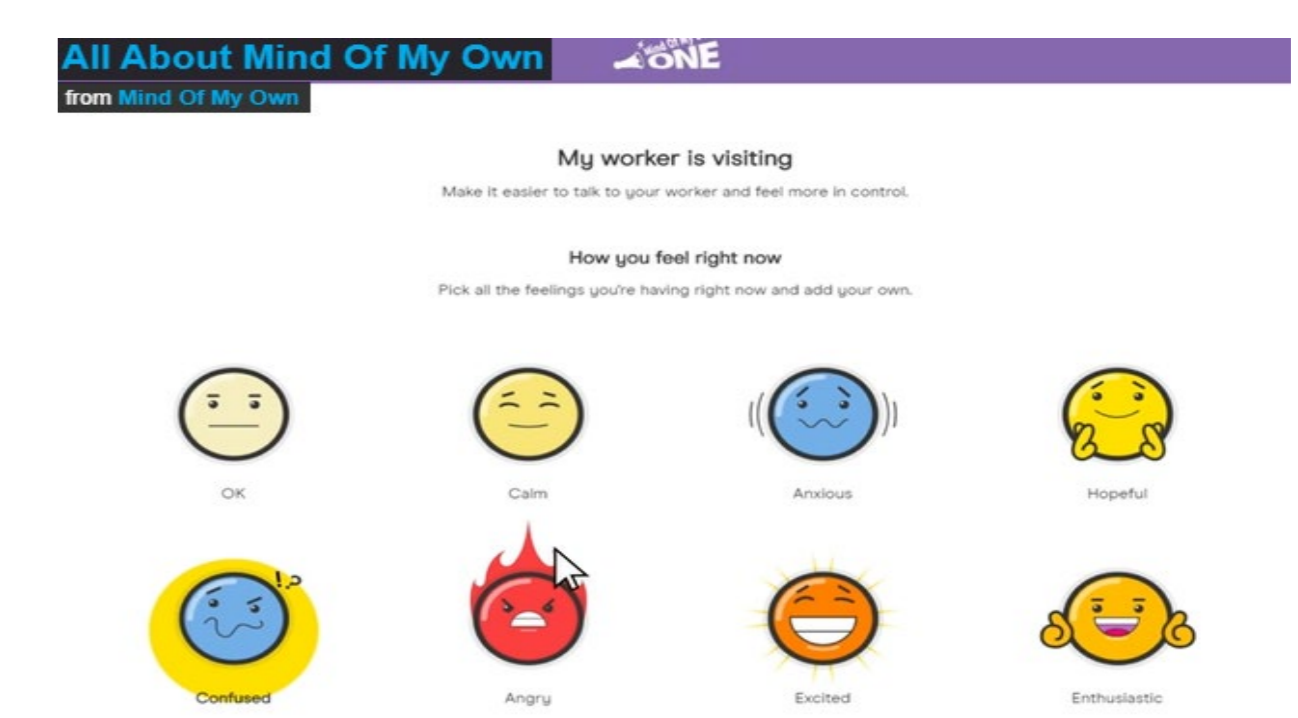
Figure 1. Stages of research strategy

According to our strategy, the scientific literature review was based on the collection of different sources including: (1) scientific articles, (2) non-scientific articles, i.e. working materials, doctoral theses, conference papers, conference presentations, etc., and (3) tools and methods identified by the collaborating organisations, using common definitions of the term.



To facilitate children to talk about their life experiences, relationships, feelings and thoughts and wishes, professionals might communicate with children using **drawings, pictures, worksheets, workbooks, dolls.** (example dolls, picture 2, Authors)

The **Mind of My Own app** is also designed to give voice to children's lived experiences and to be heard by their professionals. The children create their own account, and they say how they feel and what support they need from their workers (<https://mindofmyown.org.uk/>).



## Conclusions and implications

Many practical tools are not necessarily documented through academic research; however, certain tools are implemented through toolkits and seminars provided by specialist centers or other organizations. Research has identified a lack of the use of pedagogical tools and methods in social work with children and a lack of play skills (Ferguson, 2016; Husby et al., 2018). Research has also identified lack of communication skills (Ferguson, 2016; Toros, DiNitto, & Tiko, 2018) and the fact that training in this area needs to be improved so that professionals have the skills to communicate effectively with children (Lefevre, 2017). It is not easy to find sources that specifically related to the tools/methods that support the participation of young children in youth care. A sensitive approach is required to using tools and methods that takes account of the power imbalance in the child/professional relationship and that takes account of the child (their age, gender, ethnicity, experience), the issues being discussed, the choices, preferences, and competencies of the child (and the adult), and the wider contextual issues. The dialogical approaches and participatory tools that have been highlighted, can lead to greater recognition and respect. Digital technology has opened new possibilities for professionals and children and these means of communication and collaboration require further exploration.

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