



Reference:

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Solvår Hernes

Randi Juul

Reflections related to Communication Processes and Skills transcript podcast No

Solvår:

Welcome to this podcast related to the Panda project's brief on Communication processes and skills.

In the studio today we have Randi Juul, an associated professor at the University in Trondheim, Norway and Solvår Hernes, a social worker, representing the practice field in child welfare in the city of Trondheim.

Solvår:

So Randi.

How do you understand collaboration and communication with children?

Randi:

Collaboration

can be understood as a process of co-creation, generating new answers and conclusions about topics and issues. Neither the issues nor their solutions are determined in advance; The parties must work through the issues together through dialogue, which is based on a subject–subject relationship (Juul & Husby, 2020).

Collaboration is closely linked to dialogical communication, and by that I mean face-to-face communication, where the participants relate to what the other is saying and alternate between speaking and listening. A dialogical approach helps to fully recognize children, as they are invited to participate.

It is important to attend to the non-verbal as well as the verbal communication when collaborating.

Solvår:

Ok, so you're saying that verbal and non-verbal as well as dialogical communication is important here. What else should social workers keep in mind when communicating and collaborating with children?

Randi:

There are many things to keep in mind. We have to listen to the children's choices and preferences. Each child is an individual and are at different stages related to development, competence, age, gender, disability, sexuality and so on. It is also important to keep in mind their religion, ethnicity, language, and family and social context, as well as their past and present experiences. Perhaps most important is the level of trust and relationship with the professionals.

Randi:

Children's participation is embedded within complex power relations and power issues need to be acknowledged and addressed as far as possible.

Randi:

So Solvår, what type of communication skills do you think are important for social workers to have?

Solvår:

I think that in order to succeed with this we must have social workers who have the ability to establish rapport, tuning into the child's verbal and non-verbal expressions, listening tentatively, asking questions, and being capable of responding appropriately to challenging and difficult emotions, issues and feelings that the children are expressing. Children start communicating from birth and social workers must have knowledge of the different ways children communicate from very early on. For example, through playing, eye contact and other non verbal skills. We have to explore each child's way of communicating, because children's communication skills are influenced by their experiences and upbringing.

Randi:

Do you think other things like context are of importance when communicating with children?

Solvår:

Well, yes, in different ways. We who work with children have easy access to communicating and to seek their views. There are different reasons for listening to their views. One example is that we obtain information from children to change or improve legislation and policies. When they express themselves and are heard, they learn the process of democracy. They learn that they have the opportunity to be heard and be involved in the development of services that impact them.

The family relations, friends, community and society they live within, that are contexts that affect the opinion of a child. What do they hear and pick up from others? These same contexts also influence professionals when communicating with children.

In addition we have the sociocultural approach which says that the children's opinion and views are shaped through

interaction with other people. This is important to remember when talking to children. Who are their informants?

We as adults and/or professionals are also influencers.

The question is not only about whether the children are given the opportunity to participate, but also how the specific child participates, what opportunities for participation exist, and how the opportunities for participation can be strengthened.

Solvår:

Conclusion

What can we conclude from reading this brief Randi?

Randi:

We can conclude that communication and collaboration between professionals and children involve complex social, relational and contextual processes. We need to be aware of the child and the particular issues they are facing, and how they are influenced by family, community and also professionals.

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