

## Interview pupils

It is always a good idea to involve pupils in decisions that affect them. Giving pupils a voice was already advocated by Michael Fielding (2001) and Laura Lundy (2007). If pupils' voices are taken into account, this adds to their feeling of autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

But it might be easier said than done. Some (beginning) teachers fear that interviewing pupils might undermine their authority or that pupils will not say what's on their minds. So it is important to prepare the interview beforehand, to make sure that the situation is 'safe' for all participants.

### Setting the stage

Decide if you want to interview an individual pupil, a small group, or the whole class.

There are (dis)advantages to all settings: the opinion of an individual might not be representative for the whole group, a small group might influence each others' answers (but feel more at ease than on their own), a whole class is difficult to manage etc...)

### Individual interview (15-30 minutes)

1) Invite pupils for an interview, indicating what the topic will be and stressing the fact that it has NOTHING to do with assessment and that participation is voluntarily. You could start by asking a pupil that you already bond with.

2) Shortly introduce the subject you want to talk about. Stress that it is about the pupils' opinion, that there are no 'good' or 'false' answers. Stress the fact that the answers will not be used by anyone but yourself.

3) Ask open questions, which invite for an open answer. For example:

'What does your ideal day at school look like? What are you doing? What is your teacher doing?'

'how would you like a lesson to start?'

'what do you expect a teacher to do when it is noisy in class?'

Do not ask questions that can be answered with Yes or No or questions that are too personal (do you think I am a good teacher?)

4) To make the interview less linguistic, you could think of using artefacts.

For example:

- Bring a set of postcards and ask the pupil to choose the card that represents an ideal day at school. Ask for an explanation
- Ask the pupil to draw the ideal teacher. Ask a clarification. What is this teacher doing, saying?
- Ask the pupil to rate a statement: how would you rate this on a scale from 1 to 10? Ask for an explanation

## **Small group interview**

Interviewing a small group offers new possibilities. Pupils do not feel so exposed in a small group and they can discuss the answers or opinions.

- 1) Invite pupils for an interview, indicating what the topic will be and stressing the fact that it has NOTHING to do with assessment and that participation is voluntarily.
- 2) Shortly introduce the subject you want to talk about. Stress that it is about the pupils' opinion, that there are no 'good' or 'false' answers. Stress the fact that the answers will not be used by anyone but yourself.
- 3) you can ask questions and let all group members answer one by one (see individual)

You can also use sticky-notes and a placemat/flip-over sheet as an aid for the group interview. Pose a question and ask the participants to write down their answer individually on a sticky-note. Ask the first participant to read his or her answer and stick it on the placemat. Ask for clarification and examples. Then ask the next person to read his/her answer and to place their sticky note. If the answer is similar to the first answer, it should be close to that; if it is different, choose another place on the sheet. Continue with the other participants. At the end, you can ask the group to look at the paper and summarize the findings. Do they have something to add? An new angle?

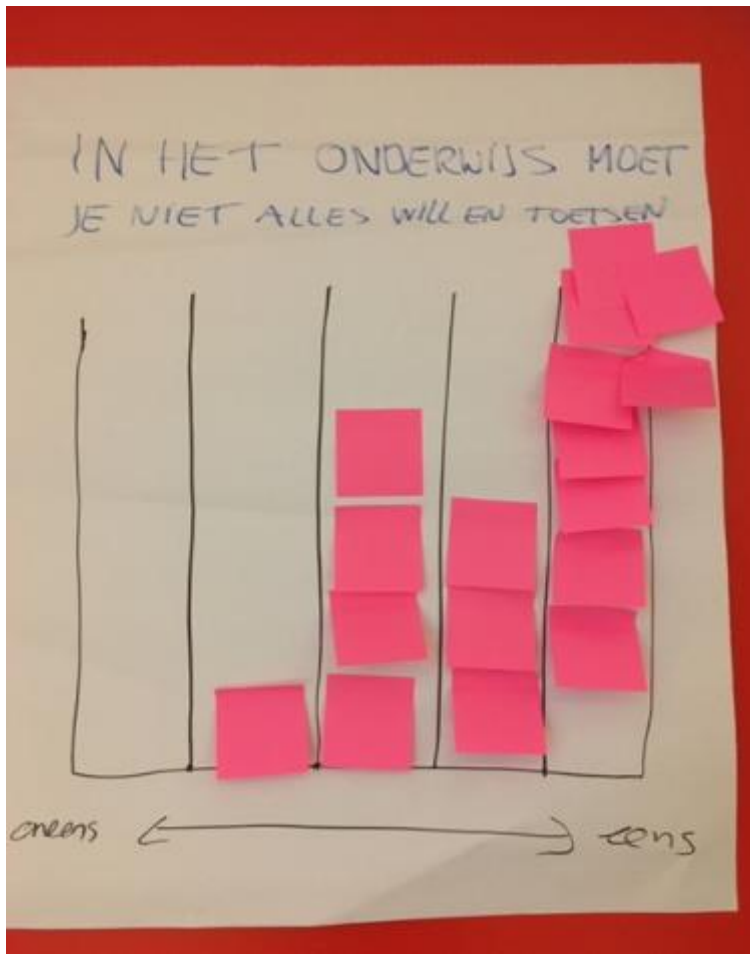
## **Class interview**

A class interview needs some preparation. It is more difficult to let individual pupils say their opinion, so a group approach is preferable.

### **Statements -**

You can use statements as a starting point for a class conversation. This can be done with the use of a menti digital tool, or in a more physical way.

- Option 1: make the statement visible for the whole class (using a power point). Let pupils 'vote' their opinion. After the votes have been casted, ask pupils if they will clarify their choice.
- Option 2: make the statement visible for the whole class. Define one corner of the room as 'agree' and the opposite corner as 'disagree'. Let pupils stand up and choose their position. Once they are grouped, ask for a clarification of their choice.
- Option 3: make flip-over sheets with statements and let pupils vote by adding a sticker.



### Open questions – search for solutions

You could use the 'world café' method and invite pupils to help you think of a solution.

For a group of 30 pupils, make 5 groups, each with a different question to start.

Write your question on a flip-over sheet (for example: 'what does a teacher need to do when the class is noisy?') and ask them to write down as many solutions as they can find. After ten minutes, let all pupils move to another table, except one, who is staying with the poster and acts as a host. In the next ten minutes, the new group of pupils is brainstorming about the question, adding to the answers that are already on the sheet.

After two rounds you will have a lot of input.

