THE CHILD’S CONCEPTION OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND SELF-ESTEEM

JANINA USZYNSKA-JARMOC, UNIVERSITY OF BIALYSTOK

ABSTRACT | INTRODUCTION | BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME | METHODS | RESULTS | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION | REFERENCES

ABSTRACT

This study investigated what is the image of self presented by pre-school children regarding structure (self-knowledge, self-evaluation and self-regulation) and contents (what children know and talk about themselves). Data were collected using: videotapes (observations of children and semi-structured interviews – procedures of self-description analysis); document analysis (collection of children’s drawings with self-portrait); two questionnaire of on self-esteem. The research was carried out on a group of 31 children between 6 and 7 years selected at random from urban pre-schools. Data uncovered the variety the child’s conception of self and description the structure and system self. The empirical research was based on the analysis of uninhibited characteristics of self given by children. Cognitive representations were analysed regarding formal as well as contents qualities. All of these narratives ought to be taken seriously into account for a better understanding of a child’s development and for the improvement of educational practice in pre-schools.

INTRODUCTION

The terms self-concept and self-esteem are often used interchangeably (Street & Isaacs 1998). Yet, many researchers argued that self-concept and self-esteem are different constructs and clearly represent two different dimensions. King (1997) pointed out that we understand self-concept as “the perception(s) one has of oneself in terms of personal attributes and the various roles that are played or fulfilled by the individual”. King (1997) explained that self-concept “represents the description an individual attaches to himself or herself... in terms of roles and attributes”. Since self-concept represents only a description of the perceived self and does not involve a “value judgement”, self-concept should not be depicted as positive or negative. Conversely, self-esteem refers to the evaluation one makes of the self-concept description and, more specifically, to the degree to which one is satisfied or dissatisfied with it, in whole or in part. Self-concept would refer to the perception of being for example, tall, whereas self-esteem would refer to one’s feelings about being tall (happy or unhappy). Thus, contrary to the definition of self-concept, it is acceptable to consider self-esteem as being positive, negative or neutral (King 1997). Self-concept includes those aspects of self-image that are descriptive, non-judgemental, and fairly consistent regardless of time, while self-esteem includes the aspects or attitudes that are self-evaluative and more vulnerable to situational and value influences. Rosenberg (1979) defined self-concept as the complete thoughts and feelings of a person in reference to self as an object. Some writers assert that self-esteem reflects the difference between the ideal self (what one would like to be like) and the actual self (what one is actually like). Otherwise the self-concept describes the self, and self-esteem is the evaluative component of object, influenced by the discrepancy between one’s desired self and one’s existing self. Gottfredson (1985) suggests that self-concept is comprised of two dimensions: identities and self-esteem. Identities refer
to the content of one’s beliefs about self.

For purposes of this paper, the self-concept is defined as person’s self-perceptions of their identity through various roles and identities. Self-esteem is defined as one’s evaluative assessment of the self-concept. Thus in this study we understand self-esteem as a component of self-concept. Whereas we understand “self-concept” as the same term as “self-image” and we use these terms interchangeably. Self-esteem comes from self-evaluation while self-concept comes from self-knowledge and self-evaluation. In other words, self-concept is how we see ourselves or who we are, and self-esteem is how much we like what we see.

Lopez-Justica (2001) pointed that self-concept comprises three fundamental elements:

- Identity (self-image), that is, individuals’ perception of themselves in relation to cognitive aspects
- self-esteem, the value that individuals attach to the particular manner in which they see themselves
- behavioural component, reflecting how self-concept are interrelated and complementary, such that a positive self-concept implies positive self-esteem, and vice versa.

Statman (1993) suggested that self-acceptance is a necessary condition for self-esteem, not just a sufficient component. Self-esteem is thus defined as a generalised value one places on one’s self – the sense of worthiness one feels and acts upon in reference to one’s self-concept. (Street & Isaacs 1998).

Self-concept is, in part, socially constructed (Onwuegbuzie 2000; Story 1998). People’s perception and assessments of themselves are influenced by others’ evaluations of them. This is especially true of a child’s self-image which is largely based on the way others treat him or her. The quality and character of the process of shaping self-concept of a child in the early childhood crucially depend on parents and teachers. Adults’ reactions to children tell them about the type of people they are and also the type of people we want them to be. Children then judge how much they measure up to this ideal.

In psychological publications (Cashwell 1995; Davies & Brember 1995; 1999; Lawrence 1996; Zaborowski 1998) it was emphasised that a child must have a positive self-image in order to get the most out of education. With high and positive self-esteem, children gain the confidence necessary to engage in challenging tasks, to believe in their ability to master these tasks, and to do well at school. In a review of research on self-esteem enhancement in children (Gipps & Tunstall 1998) it was pointed out that, in the context of school, self-esteem is found to be positively associated with school achievement. Therefore, the concept of self has profound practical significance for teachers.

Researchers (in particular: Fenzel 2000) have pointed out that individual differences regarding change in feelings of self-worth during the school transition are important to investigate because of the potential for decreased feelings of self-worth to be precipitated by new academic and social competency challenges presented by a new and larger school environment, and because low feelings of self-worth have been found to mediate the development of psychological symptoms and academic difficulties for young adolescents. Scott (1999) quotes research conducted by Amundson, who reported that self-esteem diminishes as pupils get older. Eighty-nine percent of kindergarten pupils were reported to have high self-esteem, whereas only 20 % of fifth grades, 5 % of high school graduates, and 2 % of college graduates reported high self-esteem.

Although self-concept research has succeeded in motivating educators to monitor and enhance levels of self-worth within schools and pre-schools, the methods of measuring the
self have been found to be in need of modification in order to increase the applicability of psychological knowledge to education. Street and Isaacs (1998) underlined that one of the biggest problems in developing adequate self-concept and self-esteem theory is the poor quality of available measurement instruments. Also researchers (Schott & Bellin 2001; Beane 1991) assert that in the last two decades of research on self-concept has had a consistent tendency to measure the self in abstract, context-free terms. Demo (1985) emphasised that there has been a paucity of empirical measures of the impact of situation discrepancies in self-impressions.

In psychology, researchers have proposed a wide range of self-esteem and self-concept measures. In addition to numerous self-report scales, there are pictorial measures for children, Q-sort prototype measures based on observer judgements, peer ratings, self-ideal discrepancy measures, measures based on letter preferences and experience sampling measures; reaction time measures, and even single-item measure (Robins, Hendin & Trzesniewski 2001; Burnett 1998). Hatter (1985) conceptualised the following five domains of self-perception for children: scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance, and behavioural conduct. Burnett (1994) listed such elements of self-concept: self-esteem, physical appearance self-concept, physical ability self-concept, peer relations self-concept, parent relations self-concept, reading self-concept, mathematics self-concept, school self-concept. Villa and Auzmendi (Lopez-Justicia, Pichardo, Amezcua and Fernandez 2001) applied the Scale PAI to measure self-concept which include the following categories: autonomy (feelings of independence), security (self-confidence in performing tasks), sports (self-confidence in competing), family (how the subject feels in the family), classroom (how the subject feels in the classroom), self-worth (in the sense of individual competence), physical appearance, feelings of belonging. Academic self-concept scale made by Michael and Smith (1976) for students in elementary school titled “Dimensions of Self-Concept” (DOSC) has five subscales, namely Level of Aspiration, Level of Anxiety, Academic Interest and Satisfaction, Leadership and Initiative, and Identification versus Alienation.

**BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME**

The examples quoted above indicate measurements of identical or similar spheres (contents) of image of a child’s self. However, these spheres are most frequently determined in advance and examined similarly to those of youth and adults. Yet the author’s observations show that the categories of self-knowledge mentioned above rarely appear in casual, spontaneous narration of children about themselves. Therefore it may be assumed that from the children’s point of view, these contents are not the most important for them. Hence it seems that a more accurate method of learning about a child’s concept of self is to analyse the contents of children’s narration about themselves, expressed freely, spontaneously in their natural language. Only in such cases it is possible to receive actual image of self shaped in a child’s mind and not an abstract model elaborated in isolation from reality. Therefore in the study it was assumed that the components of a child’s knowledge about himself might include in principle all contents that come to mind while thinking about oneself. The subject of self-evaluation or self-description by a child may be not only be informative about his or her’s own appearance and physical features but also their abilities and capabilities, features of character, desires, attitudes, social roles and position among others. Therefore in the research the technique of autopresentation was applied giving children the opportunity for completely free and spontaneous presentation of information about themselves.
It must be stressed that the research carried out so far, assuming theoretical, static and abstract model of the concept of self – did not take into consideration specific social context. In this study, however, it was attempted to find out if in different social contexts children present a different image of self. We were looking for an answer to the question whether the private self, revealed by children in the presence of a person familiar or close to them is any different from the public self, presented to strangers. Searching for possible differences between the private self and the public self, both form and contents of stories were analysed. During the analysis of the narration regarding the contents of the image of self, it was attempted to indicate various categories on the basis of analysis of the actual information given by children. In this way describing the children's image of self by artificially created categories was avoided. The following aspects were analysed in the children’s stories:

1. Range of knowledge about oneself
   - number of information (indicates knowledge resource about oneself)
   - number of information categories (indicates abundance and diversity about oneself, in other words complexity of knowledge).

2. Kind of information
   2.1. Range of knowledge about self considered within the confines of the following fields:
      - Real self (our beliefs about how we are)
      - Ideal self (our beliefs about how we would like to be)
      - Obligate self (our beliefs about how we “should” be)
      - Possible self (our beliefs about how we could be like)

   2.2. Information details
      - general opinions (when the child gives information of general character, when expresses his emotions or attributes himself to certain categories, e.g. I look nice; I like animals)
      - detailed opinions (when the child gives information about himself here and now, e.g. I have a nice dress; I like feeding my cat)

   2.3. Type of information
      - Descriptive opinion (This is our picture or description of ourselves – this aspect is also termed self-knowledge) (e.g. I have blue eyes; I usually play with dolls; I have a joyful friend)
      - Evaluative opinions (self-evaluation) (e.g. I have beautiful eyes; I like to play with dolls; I like it when someone is joyful)
      - Justifying opinions (e.g. I like to go to pre-school very much because the teacher is very nice; I think my sister doesn’t like me because she beats me)

   Apart from the above, the research was an attempt to answer the question what is the level of children’s self-evaluation, this including general self-evaluation (self-esteem) and detailed self-evaluation (domain specific self-evaluation). We were also looking for possible correlation between the level of general and detailed self-evaluation.
METHODS

Instruments

- Video-recorded child’s autopresentation – “Story about me” – for public-self examination
- Child’s autopresentation – narration about oneself in connection with own drawing “May portrait” – for private-self examination.
- The Lawseq Pupil Questionnaire (Lawrence 1996) – for global self-esteem examination.
- The Kaja’s Questionnaire (Kaja 1991) for specific domain self-esteem examination.

The study was carried out on 31 six-year-old children, 16 girls and 15 boys aged between 6 and 7 years (mean age 6.8 years) attending a small-town pre-school.

Procedure

The study was divided into two parts – one for research narrative and one for the measurement of children’s self-esteem. Data collection in part I was performed in two major phases. In Phase 1, all children individually were given some general information about themselves. This phase took approximately 20 minutes for each child. The children were interviewed on separate occasions. The interviews were videorecorded and later transcribed. The children were asked to give various pieces of information characterising themselves (the most and less important for a child). In Phase 2 during typical art lesson, children were making self-portraits and then the teacher during individual conversations asked them to talk about themselves according to the following instruction: “Today I’d like you to tell me everything about yourself, everything you know and everything you want”. In both Phases of the examination the child’s task was to talk about him/herself. The difference was in the design of two different social situations in which children were telling their stories. The difference of social context in the first situation, i.e. presentation of public self, was that a stranger, a person unfamiliar to the child, asked him to tell about himself in connection with making a film about pre-school children. The child was talking in the presence of a camera and was aware that his statement was recorded. In Phase 2 the private self was examined, revealed by the children in the presence of the teacher, they were emotionally related to. The child presented his/her private self by talking about himself/herself in connection with making his/her self-portrait. Autopresentation took place in a natural situation, typical to a conversation with a child. The social context was natural, familiar to the child, because at Polish pre-schools it is usual for the teacher to talk to children about their artistic works. Children’s stories were tape-recorded without their knowledge.

Part II of the study – First their global self-esteem was determined on the basis of The Lawseq Pupil Questionnaire (Lawrence 1996), and then, on the following day their specific domain self-evaluation was assessed on the basis of Kaja’s (1991) The Self-esteem Questionnaire. These were individual examinations. Testing of the children was done in the classroom. The Lawseq Pupil Questionnaire (Lawrence 1996) consists of 16 items (four of which are distracters). Each question had three possible replies: ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘don’t know’. These replies were scored 0, 1 or 2, with 2 indicating high self-esteem. The 12 answers were added together to give a total. For example, the following items were included in this questionnaire: Do you think that other children often say nasty things about you? Do other people often think that you tell lies? Are you good at mathematics? The experimenter verbally administered the Scale Questionnaire and then told children to answer the questions based on how they generally felt about themselves and told them there were no
right or wrong answers. The Kaja's Questionnaire (Kaja 1991) is a self-report, validated questionnaire with a 10-item scale designed to assess how children feel about themselves. In this questionnaire the child makes self-evaluation by comparing oneself to his/her peers. The child is asked 10 questions designed to obtain answers about his/her abilities, capabilities and physical appearance: his/her beauty and clothes. The highest possible result is 30 points.

RESULTS

Findings from interviews and questionnaire were presented separately.

1. STRUCTURE OF THE CHILD’S IMAGE OF SELF (SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND SELF-EVALUATION) – ANALYSIS OF AUTOPRESENTATION CONTENTS

The contents of children’s narrations were analysed repeatedly. First individual pieces of information were rated among detailed categories, which were later generalised, including the contents to wider subject-groups. In this way the fields of self-knowledge were widened, which decreased the number of categories. As a result of repeated syntheses the following categories were obtained:

- ACTIVITY (information about most frequently performed activity – “I go for a walk”)
- INCLINATIONS, PREFERENCES, PENCHANTIES (information beginning with or containing the phrase “I like....”)
  - Referring to favourite activities - “I like going to the swimming-pool”, “I like going for a walk”
  - culinary – “I like cakes, meat and sweets”
  - nature – “I like animals”
  - aesthetic – “I like nice clothes”, “I like colourful pictures in books”

- OWNERSHIP, POSSESSIONS (information beginning with or containing the statement “I have...”)
  - Objects – “I have a lot of toys”
  - Animals – “I have four puppies”
  - People – “I have a brother who’s called Mark”, “I have cool friends”

- PHYSICAL APPEARANCE – “I am a tall boy”, “I have blue eyes”

- PERSONAL DATA (INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY) (information about sex, age, name, surname, address)

- FEATURES OF CHARACTER, EMOTIONAL CONDITIONS – “sometimes I’m nervous when I can’t do something”, “when I’m sad, I hide in my room”

- SCHOOL COMPETENCE – “I can read and write”, “I can draw best”.

- SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR
  - Social competence: – “I know how to take care of small children”, “I never complain on anyone”
  - Social relations:
    - family relations, place in the family – “My mom often takes me to family meetings”, “I have a sister who is younger than me”
    - relations with peers – “with friends we make up cool games”, “when I come back from pre-school I always go to a friend to play”
HEALTH – “I'm often ill”, “I have a runny nose”
PAST EXPERIENCES – “Once I was at a ZOO and I saw a lot of nice animals”
DREAMS, PLANS – “I wish it was summer now”, “I’m going to Belgium for holidays”.

Analysis of the narration respectful of number of pieces of information indicates that most pieces of information refer to inclinations of children to various kinds of activities and play, this including culinary preference. (Figure 1.)

Fig.1.

1. INCLINATIONS, 2. OWNERSHIP, 3. SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (Social relations), 4. PERSONAL DATA, 5. ACTIVITY, 6. FEATURES OF CHARACTER, 7. SCHOOL COMPETENCE, 8. HEALTH, 9. PAST EXPERIENCES, 10. PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, 11. DREAMS and PLANS

FIGURE 1. Comparison of the contents structure of the image of private and public self of six-year-old children.

The examined children often talk about social relations in the family and among peers. However significantly more rarely their narration includes information about their sense of identity or school competence. Generally it may be affirmed that a child's image of self concerns mostly the present. There are not many pieces of information referring to the nearest future or past experiences.

It results from the study (Fig. 1) that the proportion of individual pieces of information given by the examined children depends of social context of self-presentation. Apart from that, the differences lie within the frequency of pieces of information numbered among various categories. For example compared to the public self, in the image of private self children more frequently display information concerning their inclinations – they especially emphasise their favourite activities but pay little attention to culinary preferences. Apart from that in the image of private self there are more pieces of information related to social relations, mainly with peers. The differences of contents also manifest in the fact that in the image of private self, children more frequently talk about their physical appearance.

Comparison of statements of all children from two different social contexts leads to the
conclusion that they most often differ as regards contents, number of pieces of information and information categories. Below there are examples of various (Izabela) and similar (Mateusz) statements in two different social contexts:

Izabela (6,7) – Private self:

“I have long eyelashes and deep brown hair. I don’t wear a fringe. I like to read and write. I like to read and play. I like flowers. My mom wears glasses. My dad likes to drink beer. I have a cat and two guinea pigs. I like going to my grandmother very much. I like to be there on the bridge. I like to play computer games. At my grandma’s there are many cats and a dangerous dog in the yard. There’s one dog at my place and one at grandma’s, too.”

Izabela (6,7) – Public self:

“I don’t like my company. I like to have a great time. My favourite thing is to wear my most beautiful dress”

Mateusz (6,11) – Private self:

“At home I play computer games. I like to ride a bike. I like to play football. And wash the car. I like to mown the lawn, help my dad and play football”

Mateusz (6,11) – Public self:

“I like to play football. I like to wash my car. I like to ride a bike far.”

2. CHILDREN’S SELF IMAGE STRUCTURE – ANALYSIS OF THE FORM OF AUTOPRESENTATION STATEMENTS

The descriptive statistics for Private Self-Concept and Public Self-Concept are shown in table I.

TABLE 1. Statistical characteristics of the measurement results of image of self (self-concept) of children respectful of number of pieces of information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>sd</th>
<th>min.</th>
<th>max.</th>
<th>d (max. - min.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private Self-Concept</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Self-Concept</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the situation of autopresentation not guided with any additional questions the majority of children (about 75%) are able to give several (usually between 8 and 18) pieces of information about themselves. An average six-year-old child can give 12 different pieces of information about his/herself. The differences of mean numbers regarding public and private self are not statistically significant.

Data presented in figure 2 indicate considerable inter- and intraindividual diversity of results as regards the range of children’s knowledge about themselves.
FIGURE 2. Comparison of individual measurement results of public and private self of children.

On the basis of graphic presentation in figure 2 it may not be determined whether there are any regularities regarding the range of knowledge about oneself presented in relation to the social context.

Analysis of the form of statement as regards number and proportion of pieces of information related to real self, ideal self, possible self and duty self leads to the conclusion that the examined children first and foremost give information about their real self (over 90% of all information given about oneself). (Figure 3.)

FIGURE 3. Comparison of contents structure of public and private self within the range of four fields of self-concept.

Considerable domination of information about real self appears both in presentation of public and private self. The number of pieces of information about real self does not differ significantly in relation to the social context of presentation. However a little more information regarding the other dimensions, namely possible self, duty self and ideal self, appear in
statements referring to public self of a child.

The analysis of the form of children’s statements regarding private and public self considered as regards number and proportion of general and detailed pieces of information (opinions) leads to the conclusion that detailed opinions clearly predominate general opinions both in autopresentation of public and private self. It is worth stressing that in private self presentation there occurred a slightly bigger disproportion of detailed and general opinions than in public self presentation. (Figure 4.)

![Figure 4](image)

**FIGURE 4.** Comparison of contents structure of public and private self within the range of number and proportion of general and detailed opinions.

Another analysis of the formal side of autopresentation statements made as regards number and proportion of descriptive, evaluative and justifying opinions (Figure 5 on the next page) draws attention to the fact that in children’s autopresentations the evaluative opinions are clearly in dominance and make up 60 % of all opinions expressed about public self and over 50 % of those about private self.
FIGURE 5. Comparison of contents structure of public and private self within the range of number and proportion of descriptive, evaluative and justifying opinions.

The justifying opinions, especially those related to private self make up a small percentage of all children's statements. The differences in number of individual kinds of opinions are very clear. Generally it may be affirmed that the statement structure analysed as regards proportion of descriptive, evaluative and justifying opinions clearly differs regarding the social context of narration.

3. EXAMINATION RESULTS OF GLOBAL AND DETAILED SELF-EVALUATION

The analysis of self-evaluation results obtained on the basis of Lawseq Pupil Questionnaire (Lawrence 1996) and the Questionnaire of detailed self-evaluation (Kaja 1991) (Table 2 on the next page) leads to the following conclusions:

- The level of global and detailed self-evaluation of the examined group of six-year-old children is quite high.
- Individual differences among children as regards the level of global self-evaluation as well as detailed self-evaluation are quite distinct.
- Differences of the mean measurement results of global self-evaluation and the mean of detailed self-evaluation are statistically significant (p<0.05)
- There is no distinctive connection between the results of global and detailed self-evaluation ($r = 0.16$; $t = 0.891156$; $p > 0.05$).
TABLE 2. Statistical characteristics of self-evaluation measurement results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Σ</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>sd</th>
<th>min.</th>
<th>max.</th>
<th>d</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global Self-Esteem</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>10,1</td>
<td>4,0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain-Specific Self-Evaluations</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>22,3</td>
<td>3,7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>76,1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ t = -5,31129, \text{df} = 30, p = 0,000010 \]
\[ r = 0,163, t = 0,891156, p = 0,380180 \]

4. CORRELATION BETWEEN SELF-EVALUATION AND THE IMAGE OF SELF OF A CHILD

In this part of the study we were looking for correlation between children’s self-evaluation, determined with questionnaires for global and detailed self-evaluation measurement and the image of public and private self expressed in statements made by children about themselves in autopresentation in two different social contexts. The data in Table 3 indicate that:

- The values of correlation coefficient for private self and two kinds of self-evaluation imply lack of or slender negative correlation between the examined variables. The calculated correlation coefficient values for private self and detailed self-evaluation are not statistically significant at the levels 0,01 and 0,05 respectively.
- The values of correlation coefficient calculated for public self and global self-evaluation and for public self and detailed self-evaluation also indicate lack of statistically significant correlation between the examined variables.
- Mean value differences of all compared variables are statistically significant.
- Findings from interviews and questionnaire were presented separately.

TABLE 3. Correlation between self-evaluation and the image of self of a child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Correlation coefficient</th>
<th>t-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>r</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Self-Concept</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Self-Esteem</td>
<td>-0,039</td>
<td>-0,21+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain-Specific Self-Evaluations</td>
<td>-0,051</td>
<td>-0,279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Self-Concept</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Self-Esteem</td>
<td>-0,042</td>
<td>-0,227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain-Specific Self-Evaluations</td>
<td>-0,101</td>
<td>-0,548</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The study presented here had several objectives. One of them was to try out an alternative method of examination of a child’s image of self. It was expected that this method is more valuable from a pedagogical point of view than self-evaluation measurements performed with questionnaires. It was assumed that the image of a child obtained on the basis of autopresentation would be more authentic and reliable, because it would inform the real image of self presented in every child’s mind. It is especially important from the point of view of a pre-school teacher working with children every day. Our own research revealed a slightly different image of a child’s self than that described in literature (Burns 1982; Porter 1999; Lawrence 1996; Staatman 1993; Burnett 1994). For example Porter (1999) noted that young children’s self-concept describes how they look, what they wear, their state of health, and their possessions. When they get older, they begin to describe themselves in terms of their relationships, abilities and talents at sport and academic work, temperament, religious ideas, and ability to manage their lives (Burns 1982). Our research revealed that children talk very rarely about their health, temperament, talents, religion or school competence. Therefore for educational purposes the narrative method of a child’s concept of self examination should be more reliable. It is also important to stress that self-evaluation of pre-school children is characterised by little diversity regarding individual fields that are subject to assessment (Harter & Pike 1984; Priel & Assor 1990), while in early-school period these differences become more distinct (Marsh, Craven & Debus 1991).

Another aim of the study was to determine whether at the end of pre-school age a child reveals a different concept of self with regard to the social context in which he participates. The study did not clearly confirm what the most important differences between the contents of private and public self are. The observed qualitative differences of information contents are not distinct enough and do not refer to all statements. Research shows that people often have a tendency to evaluate themselves in a positive fashion in social situation. The study by Lagomarsino and Gallagher et al. (1998) indicate that depending on the kind of social situation (like for example maintaining an eye contact with the subject) individuals perceive and evaluate themselves and others more favourably than in isolated situations. According to the study by Coover and Marphy (2000) communication of self distinctively depends on social context. It also must be stressed that quite often in situations of social exposition children with low self-evaluation lessen their talents, capabilities, achievements or merits and as a result the level of their self-evaluation is lower and the presented image of self more laconic, short and vague (Lewis 1988; Uszynska 1997).

The third aim of the study was to determine the level of global and detailed self-evaluation created and communicated by a child on the basis of direct comparison to his peers. I was also interested in correlation between the results of consecutive kinds of self-evaluation. Both global and detailed self-evaluations were examined with questionnaires. The analysis of research material showed that both aspects of children’s self-evaluation reached a high level. However there are no distinct correlation between the examined kinds of self-evaluation. It is a quite surprising phenomenon, especially as it is stressed in the literature that global self-evaluation results from detailed self-evaluations and although it is not their total, there is a distinctive correlation between these dimensions of self-evaluation (Kaja 1991; Lawrence 1996; 1999). It is worth stressing here the opinion of some researchers that global self-evaluation, respectful of a child’s age, is a function of self-evaluation within various specific domains that are considered most important in consecutive developmental periods. For example, it results from the study by Harter that global self-evaluation of eight-year-old children is more a function of social acceptance, while general

Still one?? aim of the study was to determine the correlation between the level of children’s self-evaluation within global and detailed self-evaluation and their private and public concept of self. Is this not two aims? The study did not reveal any statistically significant correlation among the analysed variables.

The present study explored the stories told by children about themselves as an alternative approach to measuring children’ self-concept within the school environment and within a peer frame-of-reference. This study described an alternative approach to measuring the self that directly accounts for way individuals ruminate on their external actions in order to inform their self-image. As indicated in a more recent review (Markus & Wurf 1987), one conceptual advance in the self-concept literature is a change from seeing the self as a single static structure to a view of the self as multidimensional and dynamic. Apart from that it is stressed in literature that self appears and manifests through social interactions and social categorisations (Turner, Oakes, Haslam & McGarty 1994). Therefore cognition of self should be related to examination of the social context in which the individual is involved. (Coover & Murphy 2000; Ruble, Boggiano, Feldman & Loeble 1980).

The study confirmed legitimacy of application of numerous research tools in connection with diversity in different children configurations of pieces of information that make up the concept of one’s self represented in children’s minds and communicated in different ways respectful of social context of the situation in which a child makes a statement of autopresentation

REFERENCES


---

INTERNATIONAL VIEWS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Editors
ULLA HÄRKÖNEN (Editor-in-Chief) & ERKKI SAVOLAINEN (Editor), University of Joensuu, Finland

Editorial Board
PHILOMENA DONNELLY, St. Patrick's College, Ireland;
SIDSEL GERMETEN, Finnmark University College, Norway;
ULLA HÄRKÖNEN, University of Joensuu, Finland;
ANNA KIENIG, University of Bialystok, Poland

Publisher
University of Joensuu, Savonlinna Department of Teacher Education
2008