



Pupil Researchers for School Improvement

Aims of involving pupils as researchers

- To facilitate pupils' rights
- To give pupils opportunities to develop social and practical skills and to improve their social status
- To benefit school administration and ethos
- To uncover information otherwise inaccessible to adults (Fielding and Bragg, 2003)
- To improve the quality of information gathered

Children's Rights

UN Convention on 'Rights of the Child' 1989

- Children should have the right to express their views (article 12)
- Children's views should be given "due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (article 12)
- Children should be able to seek, review, import information and ideas through any media of their choice (article 13)

Increased Skills and Status for Pupils

Skills

- Improve sophistication in interaction with peers
- Learn how to use specialist equipment
- Practice reflection and improve capacity to reflect
- Use and improve writing and language skills

Status

- Build relationships with adults
- Experience autonomy in ownership of information
- Gain responsibility for producing high quality information

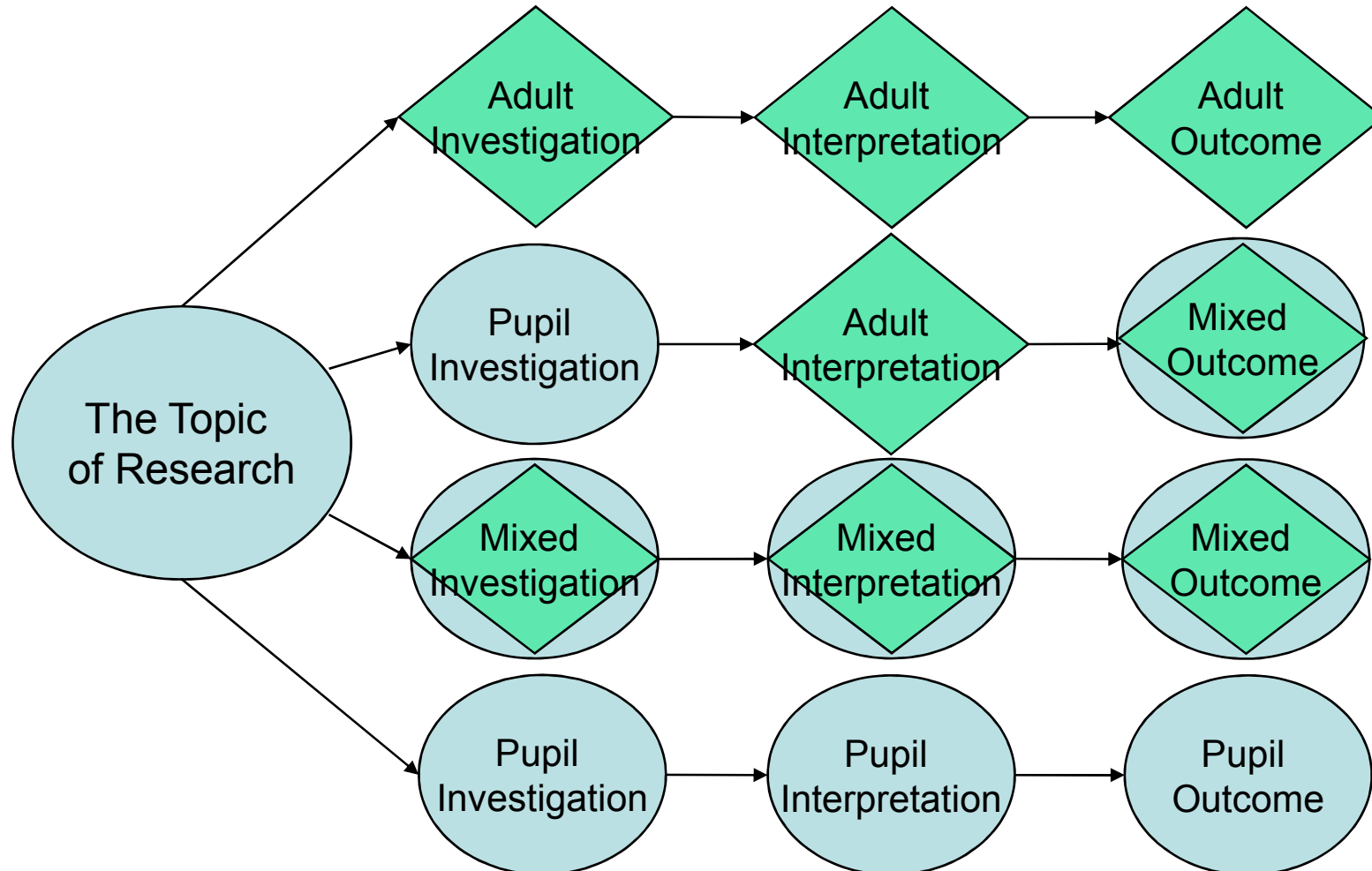
School Improvement Opportunities

- Build relationships between staff and pupils and reduce hierarchy by involving pupils in whole-school issues
- Pupils should transmit positive experiences of researching through their peer network, effecting a larger group of opinions
- More accurately reflect the social ethos and administration of the school from pupils' perspectives
- Gather information of importance to pupils

Improving the Quality of Information

- Information is gathered via avenues that align with pupils' social worlds and cognitive functioning
- Barriers to gathering valid data are removed, such as the presence of an adult researcher in interview or restricted adult viewpoints on a topic.

Variants in Data Gathering



Some things to Consider

- How will involving pupils as researchers help to you to achieve your desired research outcome?
- What are the practicalities surrounding the type of information to be gathered, that are of importance for pupils as researchers?
- At what stage/s in the research process will you involve pupils? (Alderson 2001)
- How much participation should the pupils have? (Alderson 2001)

Any questions so far?

Flaws in the Process

- Information may be biased, uninformative and simplistic (1.,2.)
- Pupils may lie when responding (1.)
- Pupils may unduly influence other participants (3.)
- Equipment use may cause concerns (1.)
- Responses may only reflect individual pupils' social realities, not the world of other pupils

(1. Symonds 2007, 2. Christensen and James 2001, 3. Pollard 1985)

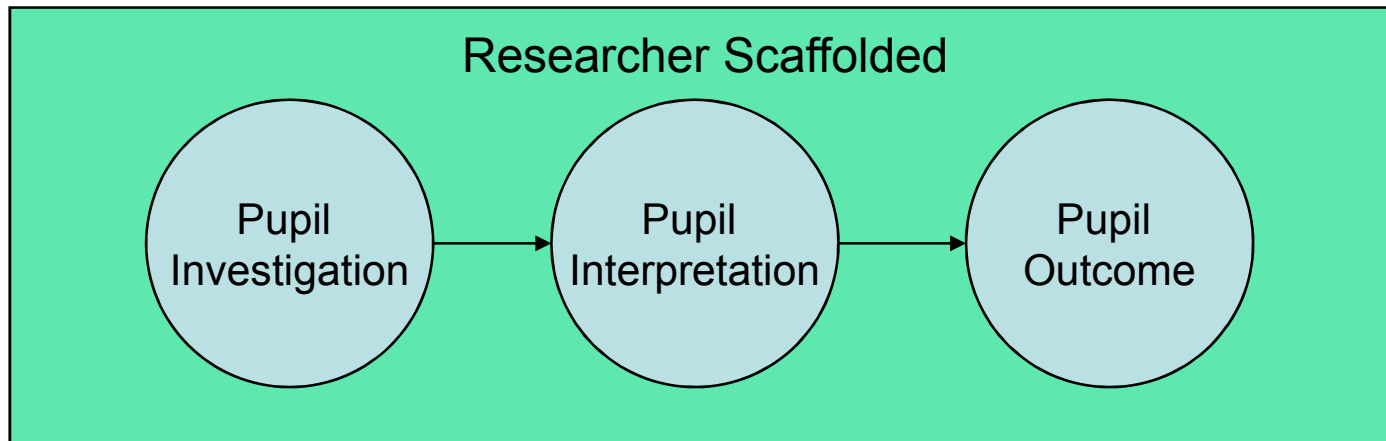
Address of Flaws

- Educate pupils as researchers
(Stress honesty, anonymity and purpose)
- Use scaffolding techniques to assist their cognition and skills (as developmentally appropriate)
- Give them plenty of time to practice using equipment and to do mock investigations
- Ask them to evaluate the process

G.R.I.T.

The 'Greneway Research Investigation Team'

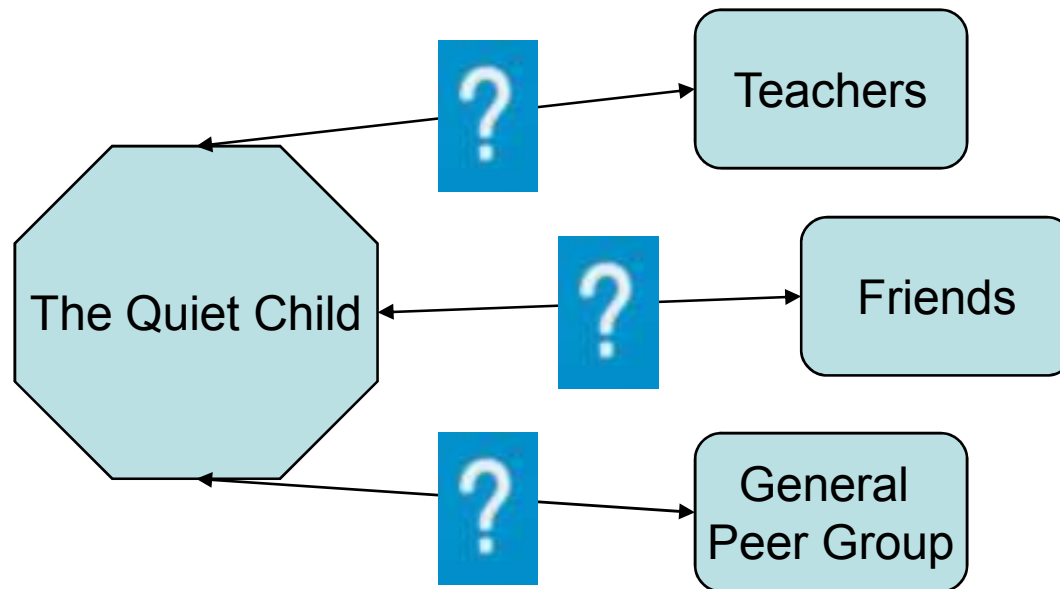
- Investigation into 'The Quiet Child'
- Five hour workshop over one school day
- 10 pupils (with some researcher experience)
- A scaffolded 'Pupil Perspective' investigation (pupils were in 'training' for future research projects)



G.R.I.T.



1. Pupils formulated a main research topic



Q) How do quiet children interact with teachers, their friends and with their general peer group?

2. Pupils completed a 'wording questions' worksheet

Aim: To write questions that will get *complex* responses (lots of information)

Tips.) Getting complex responses depends on:

- The topic of the question
- The way in which it is worded
- The way in which it is asked



Closed Question

The participant is likely to answer yes/no

My question:

Example: **Do you** like ice cream?

Open Question

The participant is free to give more information in their answer

My question:

Example: **How do you** feel about ice cream?

3. Pupils generated specific research questions for a semi-structured peer interview

Thinking about all the people in your year group, would you consider yourself to be a quieter, more shy or less confident person?

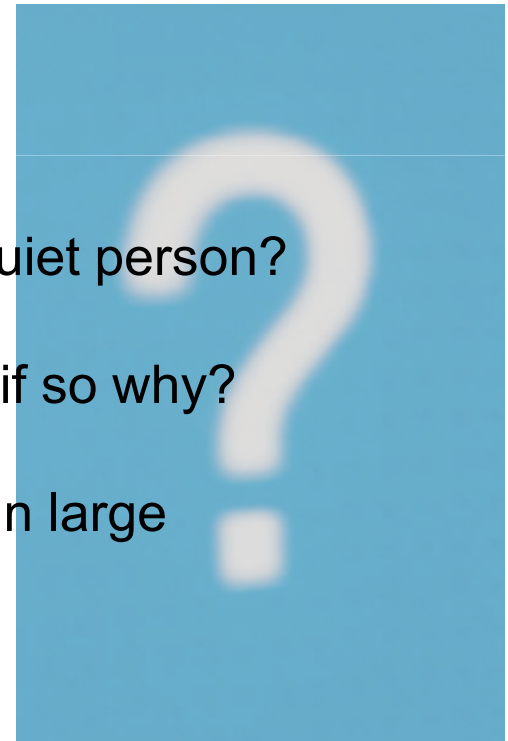
If so, why? If not, why not? (...)

What do you think your teachers think of you as a quiet person?

Do you feel any different from your classmates and if so why?

How do you feel about working with your friends or in large groups?

Do you speak up in class often?



4. Pupils were educated on ethics, anonymity and on rights of participation

Hello

My name is.....

I am looking to find out about...

Would you like to answer a few questions for me?

Your answers will be very important to our study.

We will not use your name in the study or tell the other people in the study who you are. Your answers will be anonymous, unless you tell us something that could cause serious harm to yourself or others.

We could do the interview.....(suggest a place)

Thank you for your time in being interviewed.

5. Pupils practiced using recording equipment and interviewing other members of G.R.I.T.

6. Pupils decided on a representative year group sample then interviewed them at break time

(video clip)



7. Pupils transcribed the interviews in pairs using headphones and Microsoft Word



8. The interview transcripts were printed and coded.

Pupils received a copy of each transcript. These were cut into single statements and coded into intuitive categories according to topic



9. Pupils constructed a report according to the information in the categories

Teachers

“One child who said they were quiet said that the teacher thought they were actually quite chatty”

“When they answered the question they didn’t really seem to care what the teachers or people think”

Friends

“The results vary for this. Some of the children say they have loud friends but some say they prefer to have quiet friends like them”

“This shows that the child who is quiet or shy may be friends with louder individuals”

General

“Quiet children do not always feel different or have quiet friends, they still like the same thing as loud people and are sometimes only quiet in class and can actually be chatty at times”

“Not everyone is stereotypical so no one person is the same as the others”

“In our research people gave different answers. This shows that however quiet you are it doesn't mean you are the same as everyone else who is quiet”

Outcomes for Pupils

- ✓ Improved personal understanding of the topic
- ✓ Practice in segmenting a conceptual whole into components
- ✓ Practice in writing different types of questions to achieve different outcomes
- ✓ Improved communicative skills by interviewing
- ✓ Improved practical skills by using digital recorders
- ✓ Categorising information (into codes)
- ✓ Production of a research report

Outcomes for the school

- ✓ Information on a topic of choice, that reflects pupils' realities and perspectives
- ✓ Maximised the potential of gathering information by pupils in oppose to utilising teaching staff or external researchers
- ✓ Pupils who have skills in qualitative data gathering and analysis, who can participate in future research projects
- ✓ An activity that facilitates pupil voice

What could you investigate in your school that would benefit from involving pupils as researchers

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Active Participant Workshop

- Topic generation
- Generating research questions
- Responding to research questions
- Evaluating your responses

The workshop focuses on improving the quality of information by prompting reflection – a tool for involving pupils as researchers

Topics

- In groups, pairs or individually, generate one or more topics that you would like to investigate by involving pupils as researchers in your school
- What are your topics?
- Why do you want to involve pupils as researchers in this?

Questions

- Generate two research questions surrounding this topic
- Addressing one of the two research questions, generate a main interview question that you would ask someone in your professional position
Remember to not ask closed questions!
- Write down your answer to this question (Z)

Participant Researchers Generation X!

Aim: To investigate our responses

- *Model*
- In pairs or in groups of three, have a peer ask you your interview question, followed by the evaluation statements (on the next slide and on sheets)
- Discuss the written response (Z) in comparison to the verbal information resulting from the evaluations (X)

Evaluation of Responses (X)

- 1) What evidence are you using to support your judgement, opinion, evaluation or method?
- 2) What type of evidence is this? (observation, emotion)
- 3) Is there a value or belief attached to your evaluation of this evidence?
 - If so, what is this? (go to 3b)
 - If there is not, why not? (skip 3b)3b)When in your life did you develop this and why?
- 4) Is there any piece of evidence that is more influential or significant than others?
 - What is this? (go to 4a/b)
 - If there is not, why not? (skip 4b/c)4b)Why have you chosen it?
4c)Why did you decide this?
- 5) Do you change your judgement/opinion/evaluation/method often?
 - If so, why?
 - If not, why not? (go to 5b/c)5b)What would make you change it?
5c)If so, why?



Discussion?