



Bildung und Kultur

Leonardo da Vinci
Pilotprojekte



Observation and documentation tools and participative methods to verify personal assumptions regarding girls and boys in early childhood centres

Jens Krabel, Dissens e. V.

These observation and documentation tools and participative methods give you the opportunity to verify your personal assumptions regarding girls and boys you might have expressed in our "Questionnaire to assess gender-specific behaviour and interactions between children in early childhood centres¹".

But of course you can use the observation and documentation tools without having completed the questionnaire to assess gender-specific behaviour and interactions between children in early childhood centres.

This tool gives you the opportunity to analyze the **following questions**:

- Do girls and boys prefer to stay in distinct areas of the group room?
- Do girls and boys prefer different games and activities?"
- Do girls and boys express certain feelings such as anger, sadness or joy in a different way?"
- Do you think that girls and boys are similarly satisfied with the activities and games you offer the children? Explain your view,
- Do children ban other children from games with explicit reference to their gender?"
- Is the issue of being a girl or a boy an (educational) topic for children?"

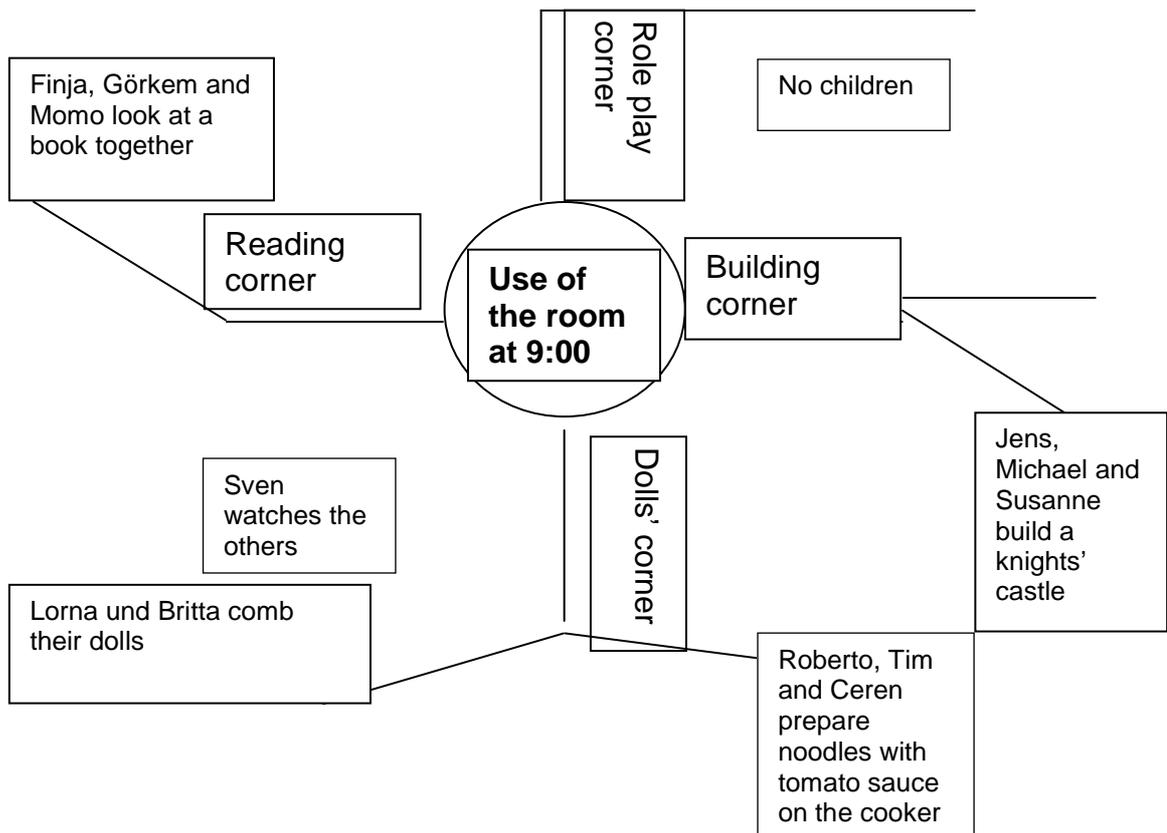
¹ This questionnaire can be downloaded on www.genderloops.eu.

1. Do girls and boys prefer to stay in distinct areas of the group room?

1.1. Observation Tools

1.1.1. Mind Map

You can draw into the observation diagram of a mind map which games/activities girls and boys prefer. You can enter children and their activities into the following diagram – which you may adapt to your conditions – at previously fixed points in time (for instance every hour or every two hours)



1.1.2. Table for entering the observations of girls and boys

You can enter the areas where the girls and boys are staying in a certain moment in a two-dimensional table. In this example, children are observed at a time interval of half an hour.

Children Time	Where are staying the boys?	Where are staying the girls
9:15		
9:45		
10:15		
10:45		
11:15		

1.1.3. Table of frequency

This table gives you the opportunity to observe how many girls and boys are staying in which areas of the early childhood centre. In this example, children are observed once a day at 10:00 am.

Observation: 10:00 am

Day of observation	1	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	5	5	6	6	7	7	8	8	9	9	10	10
	B	G	B	G	J	M	J	M	J	M	J	M	J	M	J	M	J	M	J	M
area																				
Reading corner																				
Building corner																				
Doll's corner																				
Role play corner																				
Garden																				

1.1.4. Room sketch

Draw a sketch of your group rooms, copy the sketch and enter at previously fixed times which girls and boys are at which places and which games/activities they are doing (possibly several times a day over a longer period).

The following example is taken from: Rainer Strätz/Helga Demandewitz (2005): *Beobachten und Dokumentieren in Tageseinrichtungen für Kinder*, Weinheim and Basel: Beltz Verlag, p. 45

1.1.5. Table for entering the observations of certain girls and boys

You can enter the areas where certain girls and boys are staying in a certain moment in a two-dimensional table. In this example, certain children are observed at a time interval of half an hour

Kind Time	Görkem is staying	Tim is staying	Ceren is staying	Sabineis staying
9:15				
9:45				
10:15				
10:45				
11:15				

1. 2. Participative methods

Include the children's perspective in your verification. (Because) in their way they know exactly the places they prefer to play in. In this way, you can complement your own observations by results taken from the children's perspective.

Participation of children

1. 2.1. Children take photos of their early childhood centre

Ask the children to take photos of their early childhood centre on the basis of the following questions:

- Which parts of the centre do you like playing in best?
- Which parts of the centre do feel comfortable in?
- Which parts of the centre do you not like playing in?
- Which parts of the centre do you not feel comfortable in?

In the photo sessions, make a note of the children names and their motives. This allows you to evaluate the photos later according to gender.

1.2.2. Children interview other children with a tape recorder

Using selected topics, ask the children to interview each other in groups and to record the interviews (you can also let the children interview other children in the centre). In addition to the questions listed above, other possible questions could be:

- What do you like doing best of all in the early childhood educational centre?
- What annoys you the most in the early childhood educational centre?
- What would you most like to change in the early childhood educational centre?

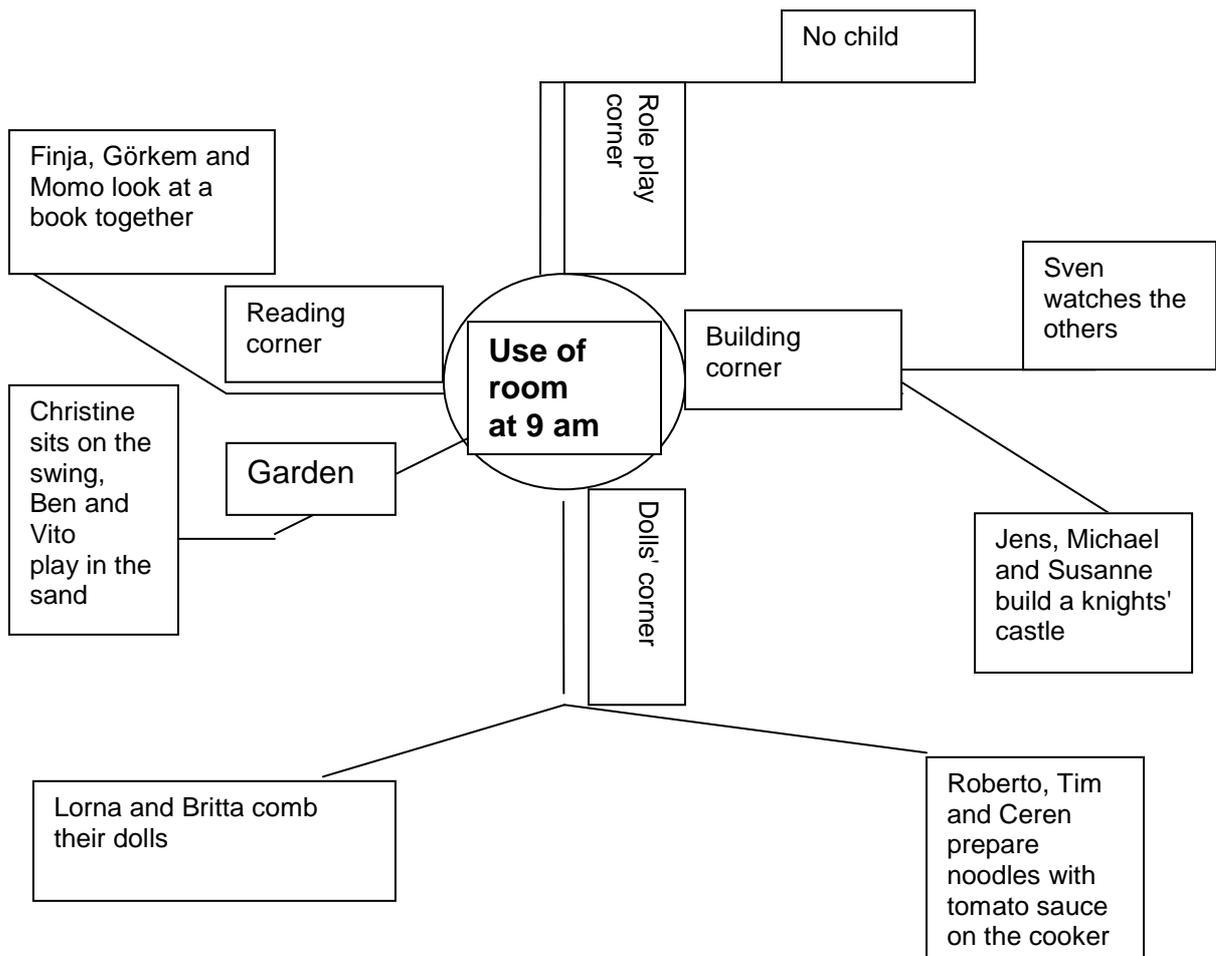
The answers can be painted onto posters as drawings and hung up. In this way, they can be used to initiate discussion at any time.

2. Do girls and boys prefer different games and activities?²

2.1. Observation tools

2.1.1. Mind map

You can draw into the observation diagram of a mind map which games/activities girls and boys prefer. You can enter children and their activities into the following diagram – which you may adapt to your conditions – at previously fixed points in time (for instance every hour or every two hours).



² The observation tools are partly based on the ideas of Helga Demandewitz and Rainer Strätz. See Rainer Strätz/Helga Demandewitz (2005): *Beobachten und Dokumentieren in Tageseinrichtungen für Kinder*, Weinheim and Basel: Beltz Verlag
Some of the descriptions of observation tools and methods contain further bibliography.

2.1.2. Table for entering the observations of girls and boys

You can enter the games/activities girls and boys are currently occupied with in a two-dimensional table. In this example, children are observed at a time interval of half an hour.

Children Time	Which games/activities are the boys doing?	Which games/activities are the girls doing?
9:15		
9:45		
10:15		
10:45		
11:15		

2.1.3. Room sketch

Draw a sketch of your group rooms, copy the sketch and enter at previously fixed times which girls and boys are at which places and which games/activities they are doing (possibly several times a day over a longer period).

The following example is taken from: Rainer Strätz/Helga Demandewitz (2005): *Beobachten und Dokumentieren in Tageseinrichtungen für Kinder*, Weinheim and Basel: Beltz Verlag, p. 45

2. 2. Participative methods

Include the children's perspective in your verification. (Because) in their way they know exactly the places they prefer to play in. In this way, you can complement your own observations by results taken from the children's perspective.

2.2.1 Mood wall

At the end of each week, educators paint symbols onto a poster which stand for the games and activities of the past week. After each game symbol there are three fields which have either a sun, a cloud or a storm with rain and lightening. On the last day of the week, children have the opportunity to evaluate the games and activities with sticker points by sticking a symbol of either the sun, the cloud or the storm after each game. The sun stands for: "I really liked this game/activity", the cloud stands for: "I liked it a bit" and the storm stand for: "I didn't like it".

(Idea taken from: Sturzbecher, D./Großmann, H. (2003): *Praxis der sozialen Partizipation im Vor- und Grundschulalter*, Munich, Basel)

2.2.2. Taking photos of children with their favourite games

Ask the children at the centre about their favourite games at regular intervals (possibly every three months).

Ask the children to either bring you their current favourite game or accompany the child to the place where the favourite game is at the time. Then, take a photo of the child with his/her respective favourite game. Stick the photos onto a poster and present it to the children and the parents, or use it to reflect the play behaviour of the children of your group.

2.2.3. Children interview other children with a tape recorder

Ask the children of your group to interview each other about selected issues and to record the interview. (You can also give the children of your group the opportunity to interview other children from the centre.) Possible questions are:

- What do you like best at the centre?
- What are you favourite games at the moment?
- What do you not like to play at all?
- Which toy/game would you like to have (buy) for the centre?

The answers can be painted on a poster as drawings and displayed. In this way, the questions can repeatedly serve to initiate discussions.

3. Do girls and boys express certain feelings such as anger, sadness or joy in a different way?"³

2.1. Observation tools

2.1.1. Targeted observation of an educator

Pay attention to the children's expression of feelings over a period of two to four weeks for half an hour to one hour on two to three days a week and document your observations.

Try to represent the expression of feelings of girls and boys in this documentation as neutrally and descriptively as possible.

Children involved	Situation (free description) What do you observe? Which situation results in the child/children expressing feelings?	Expression(s) of feelings of the child, children

³ The observation tools are partly based on the ideas of Helga Demandewitz and Rainer Strätz. See Rainer Strätz/Helga Demandewitz (2005): *Beobachten und Dokumentieren in Tageseinrichtungen für Kinder*, Weinheim and Basel: Beltz Verlag
Some of the descriptions of observation tools and methods contain further bibliography.

2.1.2. Noki – Notes on children

The *Noki* serves to note spontaneous observations of the educators in the daily life at the centre in a simple, clearly structured way.

The *Noki* is a notebook in which you can record the children's feelings and the situations which provoke them. You can summarise your observations in a few sentences indicating place and time.

(Idea taken from: Dorothee Jacobs (2006): *Kreative Dokumentation*.

Dokumentationsmodelle für Kindertageseinrichtungen, Berlin – Düsseldorf – Mannheim)

2.2. Participative Methods

Include the children's perspective in your verification. (Because) in their way they know exactly the places they prefer to play in. In this way, you can complement your own observations by results taken from the children's perspective.

2.2.1. It makes me sad, angry, happy, if ...

In this game children can tell the group which events provoke certain feelings in them. The children may continue the following sentences.

It makes me angry, if ...	(I'm not allowed to have a bath alone)
I'm happy if	(Mummy cuddles me at night)
I get scared if ...	(it is raining heavily)
I'm sad because ...	(Olaf always takes my doll away)

This can result in discussions about similar and different experiences: "Does anyone else get scared when it is raining heavily?" Furthermore, discussions can arise about how children deal with these feelings and which other ways to deal with them would be possible. Note during the game or afterwards, in which way girls and boys deal with certain feelings. Are there gender-related differences in certain children groups?

(Idea taken from: Sturzbecher, D./Großmann, H. (2003): *Praxis der sozialen Partizipation im Vor- und Grundschulalter*, Munich, Basel)

2.2.2. How is Finja, when she is angry?

Give the group an example in which something happens to a child who then reacts with a certain feeling. Such a situation would be, for example: Moritz sits in the dolls' corner and dresses a doll with a pair of trousers. Then Tim comes, takes the doll away from Moritz and runs away with it.

Now, ask the children how they think Moritz feels and how he will react in their opinion. After having talked about Moritz' (assumed) feelings and reactions you can then ask the children, how others in the group would react to certain feelings.

How is Finja (or Max etc.), when she is angry? What does she do then? The group can then gradually reflect on how all the other children express certain feelings.

Are there gender-related ways of dealing with it in certain children groups?

4.2. Participative Methods

Include the children's perspective in your verification. (Because) in their way they know exactly the places they prefer to play in. In this way, you can complement your own observations by results taken from the children's perspective.

4.2.1 Mood wall

At the end of each week, the educators paint symbols on a poster which stand for the games and activities that took place that week. After each game symbol there are three fields which either have symbols of a sun, a cloud or a storm with rain and lightening. On the last day of the week, the children have the chance to evaluate the games and activities with sticker points by attaching a symbol of either the sun, the cloud or the storm after each game. The sun stands for "I really loved this game/activity", the cloud stands for "I just liked it a bit" and the storm stands for "I didn't like it".

During this activity, make a note of which child evaluated which game and how. Are there any gender-related differences?

(Idea taken from: Sturzbecher, D./Großmann, H. (2003): Praxis der sozialen Partizipation im Vor- und Grundschulalter, Munich, Basel)

4.2.2. Moaning chair

The "moaning chair" may only be used to express negative things. This helps children to express their own dissatisfaction. Various rules for the moaning chair can be established. In this way the children can all agree that anything they say is not allowed to be commented on by others.

If you want to find how satisfied girls and boys are with the educational programme, then the moaning should relate to the educational programme of the educators and the range of games (e.g. "I didn't like not being allowed to go in the garden today").

(Idea taken from: Sturzbecher, D./Großmann, H. (2003): Praxis der sozialen Partizipation im Vor- und Grundschulalter, Munich, Basel)

5. Do children ban other children from games with explicit reference to their gender?

5. Observation Tools

5.1.1. Noki – Notes on children

The *Noki* serves to note spontaneous observations of the educators in the daily life at the centre in a simple, clearly structured way.

The *Noki* is a notebook in which you can record the children's expressions and behaviour when they ban other children from games with explicit reference to their gender. You can summarise your observations in a few sentences indicating place and time.

(Idea taken from: Dorothee Jacobs (2006): *Kreative Dokumentation*.

Dokumentationsmodelle für Kindertageseinrichtungen, Berlin – Düsseldorf – Mannheim)

5.1.2. Targeted observation from an educator

Over a period of two to four weeks, an educator is released for half an hour to one hour on two to three days a week to be able to specifically pay attention to gender-related “taboos” and to then record them.

When documenting the comments, try to record the exact words of the girls and boys

Participating children	Situation (free description)	Gender-related “taboo”

6. Is the issue of being a girl or a boy an (educational) topic for children?"

6. Observation Tools

6.1.1. Noki – Notes on children über Kinder

The *Noki* serves to note spontaneous observations of the educators in the daily life at the centre in a simple, clearly structured way.

The *Noki* is a notebook in which you can record the children's expressions on different gender topics. You can summarise your observations in a few sentences indicating place and time.

(Idea taken from: Dorothee Jacobs (2006): *Kreative Dokumentation*.

Dokumentationsmodelle für Kindertageseinrichtungen, Berlin – Düsseldorf – Mannheim)

6.1.2. Targeted observation from an educator

Over a period of two to four weeks, an educator is released for half an hour to one hour on two to three days a week to be able to specifically pay attention to gender-related topics or comments from the children and to then record them.

When documenting the comments, try to record the exact words of the girls and boys

Participating children	Situation (free description)	Gender topics and comments