

## Book review

### **Children and teachers as co-researchers: A handbook of activities**

Annamaria Pinter and Rama Mathew

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Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), as well as teaching any other subject, is a challenge considering the changing contexts in which educators are immersed nowadays. In this book, the editors, professors and developers in the educational area, Annamaria Pinter and Rama Mathew, seek to offer a set of real-life activities that were implemented by seventeen Indian teachers on a previous project called “Children and teachers as co-researchers in Indian primary English Classrooms,” which began officially in February 2015.

The editors of this handbook were Annamaria Pinter and Rama Mathew. The former is an Associate Professor at the centre of Applied Linguistics in the University of Warwick, who has published widely in the area of teaching English to young learners. The latter is a retired Professor of Education from the University of Delhi, who has been involved in several teacher development initiatives, including ‘Portfolio Assessment’ and ‘Diary Writing’ within a teacher-as-researcher framework.

As it is described in the introductory section, the aim of this handbook is to share a wide set of activities derived from the project mentioned before, in which children have expressed what they would like to do in class and have collaborated with their teachers exploring aspects of their own learning. This volume includes an introduction and six sections that contain forty-five activities split into different themes.

With a structure which is easy to follow, filled with pictures and charts, this handbook attracts a wide range of readers. It is useful not only to English language teachers, but also to



those who are interested in research and in changing the focus of lessons for students to be the centre of their own learning process. The language used throughout the book is clear and suitable for its purpose. The information included is concise and straightforward and the necessary explanations about the project are provided at the beginning.

As a way of guiding the readers, the introduction offers a sub-section based on the project from which the activities emerged, including the context and factors to be considered before reading, explaining the different types of schools with which Indian teachers worked and, furthermore, how the activities worked as outlines for children to be co-researchers. Moreover, the introduction has another section about the handbook, which gives an overview of its structure and content.

Each of the six following sections are numbered and describe a particular topic, such as 'Trying out something new,' 'Children making choices,' 'Handing over some control to children,' 'Building positive relationships,' 'Designing research tools and analysing empirical data,' and 'Feedback and self/peer- assessment.' All the sections have several activities with the name of the teacher who carried them out, the age of the students, the materials needed, the organisation and, in some cases, a description. Furthermore, most of the activities are presented together with charts, and at the end there is a comment from the editors which is useful to understand the purpose of the activity and how it helped both teachers and students. While the examples of the activities provided are of great help to visualize and afterwards put the activities into practice, there is no specific information about the teachers nor the different groups of students, only their age.

Overall, this volume contains a wide range of ideas to adapt and put into practice in different classroom situations, depending on the context of the teachers and the students. Even though there is no conclusion from the contributors, one can perceive a sense of positivity towards this way of working *with* students more than *for* students.

As an educator, I consider that the contributors succeeded in developing different tools within their classrooms in order to improve children's autonomy and their relationship among themselves and with the teachers. Also, the editors achieved the aim of communicating effectively the benefits of having children and contributors working together with examples taken from real-life experiences. I would highly recommend this handbook to all the educators who are interested in research as a tool for improving their classroom outcomes and for taking into account their students' voices and feelings. This book clearly states the advantage of children getting involved in their own learning, which is that they are much more motivated and learn more, which is important.

Teachers in other contexts would surely benefit from reading this book as well as from including adaptations of the activities in their own classrooms in order to experience a change in their way of teaching and the process of learning. Moreover, students worldwide can benefit from engaging in a meaningful dialogue that helps them to become co-researchers and to identify their learning process more significantly.

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