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Ethical and Methodological Associations in Doing Research on Children in a School Environment

Abstract

The new paradigm in social research on children, accepting the child as an important social actor, has its methodological and ethical specifics. In doing research on children, child-friendly research techniques are used with an emphasis on children's rights. The attempt of the researcher to apply a new method in studying children may come into conflict with the authoritarian approach to children in the school environment, where such research most often takes place. We shall examine both the conflicts between school situations and the expectations of the new approach to children in the following material using the experience of our own research on children.

Keywords: *school environment, research on children, ethics in research, child as a social actor*

Introduction

Social research on children and childhood increasingly recognizes children as independent actors, active participants in family life, and as research subjects and co-researchers as well. According to researchers, children are not excluded from the general need for individual reflection of the actual biography given by postmodern discourse (Moxnes 2003 Greene, Hogan 2005) and are able to attach their own meaning to the events in society and formulate their own opinions, important not only for the effort to understand the lives of the children themselves (Davies 2005, James 2007).