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9. Grid of analysis for the focus group tests

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Practical methodology of the implementation of the focus group sessions

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What follows is a guide for partners to the setting up and undertaking of focus groups of children in terms of their perspectives on science and scientists in general and on science websites in particular.

1. The websites to be analysed

Prior to the event partners have to select **3 websites** to be analysed by the children. The choice of websites is up to the partner, but should in all cases be justified, either by choosing sites that are deemed to differ in overall quality (e.g. one deemed of high quality, one that is less compelling and one that is deemed of poor quality) or sites that show marked differences in one of the areas analysed (for example a site low or high in interactivity, a site low or high in usability etc.). As we will be looking at differences in gender, age and socio-economic status, it is important that all participants analyse the same three sites. We cannot claim that a certain website is more attractive to girls or boys if they were presented with different sites. The question sheet for the children is in [chapter 7](#) (it has to be translated to the language of the focus group). If there are queries about what is meant by some of the terms used then these can be clarified during the session.

2. The composition of the focus groups

Each partner will undertake **8 focus group sessions**, each of **9 children**. In the younger age groups (12-14 years) there should be three 12 year olds, three thirteen year olds and three fourteen year olds, and in the older groups (15 -17 years) three fifteen year olds, three sixteen year olds and three seventeen year olds (see [chapter 6](#)). All 9 children in any group will be of the same gender and of the same socio-economic status (high or low as defined by each partner country).

The composition of the 8 focus groups for each partner:

Girls	High socioeconomic status	Age 1
Boys	High socioeconomic status	Age 1
Girls	Low socioeconomic status	Age 1
Boys	Low socioeconomic status	Age 1
Girls	High socioeconomic status	Age 2
Boys	High socioeconomic status	Age 2
Girls	Low socioeconomic status	Age 2
Boys	Low socioeconomic status	Age 2

Each group of 3 similarly aged children will work together on the evaluation of the websites that have been selected by each partner country.¹ Facilitators must mark clearly the responses of each group of children.

¹ If children are paired there will usually be one who dominates the dyad but this tends not to happen in a threesome. If children of different ages are grouped together then the older ones will dominate proceedings and similarly, if children of different socio-economic levels are put together then those from a more affluent background will dominate. As the task is based upon interacting with computers then a mixed gender group would result in the boys monopolising the keyboard and the process.

2.1. Group of young people with impairments

The suggested groups of young people with impairments are more difficult to structure as their ability to respond and to interact with websites may be compromised by their underlying impairment. We will not however need to include many such children to create a representative sample. As the rate of impairment in the general population is approximately 10% we would need to include approximately 30 disabled youngsters. We would suggest that the partners who have most experience of undertaking work with disabled groups each undertake to run extra sessions with 6 children in each group. These groups will differ somewhat in direct relationship to the type of impairment experienced and in terms of the fact that some severely impaired youngsters may have their own personal assistants who would need to be present throughout. These specific issues might be discussed at a later stage by those partners who feel that they can run such sessions.

GCU and CG91 are able to organise such a session.

3. Organisation of the sessions

3.1. Location

Local partners should decide on the most appropriate location for the focus groups. In some cases it will be possible to use a room within the school that the children attend. As long as the event will not be disrupted this arrangement means that the children are in a familiar environment and has the advantage that the partners do not have to take responsibility for transporting the children to the venue. The downside may be that teachers may anticipate participating in the event themselves. This is to be avoided as it is the *children's views* that are the focus of the activity. If a suitable space is not available in the school, then the children may be brought to a venue to participate in the event. In this case it is essential that no facilitator is left alone with an individual child.

3.2. Permission

Different partner countries have different requirements for obtaining permission to contact children and to run the focus groups with them and to ensure that the accepted ethical standards for research involving human participants are met, these protocols should be followed.

3.3. Badges

The facilitators of the session should create name badges for all the participants (including themselves). It is practical to use badges of different colours for the three age groups within the group.

It will be a much more authentic event if the young people are not accompanied into the session itself by teachers or adults they know as this will inhibit their responses. (The facilitator does not have this effect as s/he is a stranger.)

3.4. Facilitators and duration

At least 2 persons per focus group session have to be there to run the session. It is advisable that no facilitator stays alone with the child(ren) in a room.

It would be advisable for the facilitators to have someone else available to accompany youngsters to the toilet etc as otherwise they may need to leave the group unsupervised. (Children rarely all want to go at the same time so having someone else undertake this task minimises the disruption to the event and ensures that no young people wander off or become lost.)

The sessions with the focus groups will last 2 hours.

3.5. Timing

Take into account the timing of the school year when choosing the dates for the focus group sessions. In many countries the most suitable period is March and the first half of April (before Easter holidays).

A short checklist about the necessary preparations and some additional comments are summarised in [chapter 5](#).

4. The sessions

4.1. Introduction – “ice-breaker”

After a brief introduction the group as a whole should embark on what is termed an ‘ice-breaker’ as a means to prompt the young people to start thinking about the issue. It is at this point that we should also record the children’s ‘proximity to science

- 1) What is Science?
- 2) What is a Scientist?
- 3) Do you know any scientists or anyone who works in a science related field?
- 4) Do you plan to become a scientist yourself?
- 5) (For both “yes” and “no” answers to the above) Why?
- 6) Are you taking science at school?

All of these questions will serve to relax the participants whilst also focusing their thoughts on the central issues.

The responses to the above preliminary discussion should be written onto a flipchart by the second facilitator so that the information may be recorded for subsequent analysis. It is essential to record which group’s views are represented for future collation of data.

4.2. Exploration of the websites

The young people should then be invited to explore the websites. Each group of 3 participants should be given approximately 20 minutes with each of the websites. Each participant has to fill in the grid for each of the websites individually. Don’t guide their navigation through the websites, they should proceed as they want to and/or usually do.

Please be aware that some of the children may have difficulty in reading the criteria or in utilising the keyboard so the facilitator should remain on hand to resolve any such difficulties.

Please ensure that the computers used for the session have no access to websites that are not appropriate for children.

4.3. Closing discussion

Once each group of 3 children have evaluated each of the websites the facilitator should then bring the group together again for a general discussion. The flip-chart can be utilised again as an *aide-memoire* for the group but the young people’s responses should be audio-taped as well. (This provides the richness of the idiosyncratic perspective that the children have of the web-sites and verbatim quotations will add quality to the final report on this part of the project.)

Make sure to accurately record which website a child is talking about, either by indicating clearly “site 1, 2 or 3”, or even by using a different flip chart for each site.

The facilitator may usefully extend the discussion from the 3 websites that have been reviewed to include questions about other websites that the participants frequently use. For example:

- 1) Which of the websites selected was best?
- 2) Why?
- 3) Which other websites do they frequently use?

- 4) Why do they like the ones they think are good?
- 5) Why do they not like others as much?

The participants should then be offered to ask any questions that they have for the facilitator. (Prepare to be surprised!) They should then be thanked for their participation and then taken back to the adults who accompanied them to the institution or the location where they ought to be.

5. Preparation for the sessions

1. Identify the schools you would like to work with. Send a request to the headmaster asking whether they would like to participate. Arrange a meeting with the headmaster.
2. At the meeting, make sure you obtain headmasters written consent
3. Prepare consent forms for parents if requested in your country, also give a copy to the class teacher.

Once consent has been obtained

4. Arrange a suitable time to conduct the focus groups and a suitable room
5. From the class teacher, obtain names and birthdates (age) from all children in the class
6. Make name badges for the children in three different colours (see chapter 6).
7. Organise your materials (Flip chart/ laptops or PCs / recording equipment/ felt tip pens in three colours)

On the day

8. Set up your room, so that children can access the websites easily and so that all statements will be picked up by the audio recorder
9. Obtain verbal consent of each child before you take them to the room
10. Note down the names of the children chosen on the table below
11. Follow the instructions given

During the recording

12. Have separate blank sheet for the flipchart for each group to record answers to the ice-breaker questions, which include (as detailed in the instructions)
 - a. Asking their perception of Science/Scientists
 - b. Asking their proximity to science
 - c. Asking whether or not they have science at school

Note each answer using a pen that corresponds to the colour of the name-badge (I.e. a red pen for a child with a red name badge).

You might also consider the use a notepad to note down other relevant information

13. Before you start the audio recording, state clearly which session is being recorded
14. When a young person wants to speak - ask their name first – e.g. “Peter, what would you like to say”. That way, you have a reference for the name
15. From here, follow the instructions given.

6. Information sheet of focus groups

Please note that the colours for name badges and felt-tip pens can be chosen according to your preferences. Red/Green/Blue are suggestions only.

Session 1

Group A - Boys, High SES, 12 year old (red)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Group B - Boys, High SES, 13 year old (blue)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Group C - Boys, High SES, 14 year old (green)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Session 2

Group A - Girls, High SES, 12 year old (red)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Group B - Girls, High SES, 13 year old (blue)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Group C - Girls, High SES, 14 year old (green)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Session 3

Group A - Boys, High SES, 15 year old (red)

Name:

Name:
Name:

Group B - Boys, High SES, 16 year old (blue)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Group C - Boys, High SES, 17 year old (green)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Session 4

Group A - Girls, High SES, 15 year old (red)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Group B - Girls, High SES, 16 year old (blue)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Group C - Girls, High SES, 17 year old (green)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Session 5

Group A - Boys, Low SES, 12 year old (red)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Group B - Boys, Low SES, 13 year old (blue)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Group C - Boys, Low SES, 13 year old (green)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Session 6

Group A - Girls, Low SES, 12 year old (red)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Group B - Girls, Low SES, 13 year old (blue)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Group C - Girls, Low SES, 13 year old (green)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Session 7

Group A - Boys, Low SES, 15 year old (red)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Group B - Boys, Low SES, 16 year old (blue)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Group C - Boys, Low SES, 17 year old (green)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Session 8

Group A - Girls, Low SES, 15 year old (red)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Group B - Girls, Low SES, 16 year old (blue)

Name:
Name:
Name:

Group C - Girls, Low SES, 17 year old (green)

Name:
Name:
Name:

7. Questionnaire for the children to be used for the analysis of the websites

WEBSITE:

1. What does the website look like?

Can you easily see what this website is about?	Yes	No
Is this website easy to read?	Yes	No
Is this site is cool to look at?	Yes	No
	Why?	
Are there things that distract you from reading the site properly?	Yes	No
	What are these?	
Looking at the pictures and videos on this site - do you like them?	Yes	No
	Why?	
Do you always know where you are on the site?	Yes	No
Find some information on X. Did you find it easy to find this?	Yes	No
	Why?	

Please note that X is to be replaced by a specific item of information, which will depend on the websites you choose to analyse. Please insert item as appropriate.

2. How can you interact with the site?

Is it easy to send feedback in?	Yes	No	
What are your favourite games, polls or quizzes on the website?	Give examples		
If there is a blog, do you like it?	Yes	No	There is no blog
	Why?		
If there is a message message board and web forum, do you like it?	Yes	No	There is no message board/ web forum
	Why?		
Would you be able to meet other people through using this website?	Yes	No	
	How?		

3. What do you think of the site?

Is the site easy to understand?	Yes	No
	Why?	
Is the site useful for you?	Yes	No
	Why?	
Is the site useful for your school work?	Yes	No
	Why?	
Does the site contain topics you find interesting?	Give examples	
Is this web site fun?	Yes	No
	Why?	

4. What does this website show you about science and scientists?

Does the site make science look easy or difficult?	Easy	OK	Difficult
Does the site show you who can become a scientist?			
Looking at this site, what are scientists like?			
Does the site make you interested in doing science yourself?	Yes		No
	Why?		

8. Tasks following the sessions

Transcribe the flipchart's contents and the audio-taped closing discussion in English into a document. Please prepare one document for each session. (You will receive the format by email.) When transcribing, please keep the transcription as verbatim as possible – do not paraphrase children's comments using adult vocabulary as changing children's expressions may result in giving your perception of what the child says rather than what it actually says. Therefore, always note down what children actually say.

Fill in the children's answers into the excel table. (You will receive the table by email.)

Please send this material about all your sessions to the GCU until **17 April**.