

SHARMED Policy Brief Series

Issue 2

Facilitation: Inviting and questioning

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1. About this policy Brief

This policy brief series regards the activities conducted in the 48 classes selected for the SHARMED project. These activities concerned the use of photography to stimulate children's narratives about their memories and to promote dialogue in the classroom, as a way of innovating education in multicultural classrooms. During the SHARMED project, the activities were coordinated by facilitators, with the task of:

- (1) Enhancing children's active participation, and in particular children's agency (autonomous contributions influencing the structure of the interaction)
- (2) Promoting narratives and dialogue.

The SHARMED project was implemented to show if and how these activities can become part of education in multicultural classrooms.

The SHARMED Policy Brief Series highlights what these activities can suggest for policies and interventions in the education system.

Facilitation of production of narratives and dialogue requires the enhancement children's agency in choosing how to act and orient their stories. The analysis of the activities allows the identification of some important facilitative actions that can accomplish this function.

This policy brief regards the ways in which facilitators can invite children to talk and the types of questions they can ask to enhance their narratives, during classroom activities.

2. Invitations to talk

The first type of action to facilitate the production of narratives (see Policy Brief 1) is inviting the children to talk. Invitations promote both the beginning of the process of communication (presenting the photograph) and its continuation (inviting to tell its story, to add details and to ask questions to the presenter). There is a variety of types of invitations.

Inviting to present is the first and most obvious type of action that can enhance a child's narrative. In example 1, the facilitator invites F6 to tell about the photograph she brought to school. The invitation is followed by F6's telling about the function and the motivation of choosing the photograph.

Example 1

1. FAC: okay, wollt ihr das Fo- äh Foto wieder in die Mitte legen und dann fragen wir doch mal denjenigen, dem das Bild gehört, derjenigen, der das Bild gehört, ob du uns da vielleicht noch mal mehr zu sagen möchtest.
okay, then could you put the photo back into the middle and then we'll ask the person whose picture it is if you ((singular)) would maybe like to say a little more about it.
2. F6: also, ich komme aus Syrien und ich wohne in Aleppo und diesen Foto habe ich in Internet gesucht und da habe ich ähm, ein Krieg gesehen und da hab ich den Bomb- Bomben wie sie unten fallen und da hab ich natürlich Angst und mh das ist echt nicht gut, dass wir müssen aus dem Syrien flüchten und ich wünsche gegen den Krieg, also weg und äh Syrien wieder gut ist.
well, I come from Syria and I live in Aleppo and I searched for this photo on internet and I saw em, a war there and and the bo- bomb how they fall down and of course I am scared and that's really not good, that we must to flee Syria and I wish against the war, well, away, and err Syria is good again.

In example 2, the facilitator stresses his question in several ways (turn 1): through a prefacing encouragement ("dai adesso), a recommendation ("eh"), and a soliciting verbal form ("ce la racconti"). M9 simply answers yes (turn 2), therefore, the facilitator insists to ask for his possible will (turn 3: "hai voglia?"). After a new positive non-verbal answer, the facilitator repeats the invitation through an exhortation (turn 5). This

exhortation finally enhances the child's narrative (turn 6). In this case, the facilitator invites the child to tell in a variety of ways, as the child seems to hesitate.

Example 2

1. FAC: **dai adesso ce la racconta eh ce la racconti questa foto?**
Come on, now he tells us eh you tell us about this photo.
2. M9: sì
yes
3. FAC: **hai voglia?**
Would you like?
4. M9: ((nods))
5. FAC: **dai prova a raccontarci la storia di questa foto**
now, try to tell us the story of this photo
6. M9: che e: ero andato in parco quando ero piccolo (.) avevo due tre mesi, (.) che ero seduto sulla
sulla panchina e la mia mamma mi aveva scattato la foto, e poi:: e: poi (..) e: m: (.) che:
*that I went in the park when I was little (.) I was two three months (.) that I was sitting on a
bench and my mum took a picture of me, and then and then (..) em (.) that*

Inviting to ask is a way of expanding the child's narrative by inviting the classmates to ask questions. In example 3, the facilitator's initial invitation enhances the children's raise of hands, and a series of questions to M5, who presented the photograph.

Example 3

1. FAC: habt ihr eine Frage zu dem Bild?
do you have a question about the picture?
2. ((children put their hands up))
3. FAC: ((to F2)) ja?
yes?
4. F2: hier ist- also dieses Bild finde ich irgendwie komisch.
here is- well I find this picture strange somehow.
5. M8: ja, das ist komisch, weil es ein Bildschirm ist
yes, it's strange because it's a screen.
6. FAC: ja?
Really?
7. M9: ich frage mich, wie er im Fernsehen reinkommt.
I wonder how he got on TV.
8. M5: da war so (.) es gab ein Bildschirm, dahinter war eine Kuppel und da konnte man reingehen
und das wird automatisch übertragen halt, aber das war nicht echt im Fernsehen. Es war nur
so ein großer Fernseher, wo man reinkommt so.
*it was like this (.) there was a screen, behind it there was a dome. You could go in there and it
would be transmitted automatically, but it wasn't really on TV. It was just a big TV where you
go into it.*

In example 4, the facilitator's invitation to ask concludes a long and rather complex turn, which includes the appreciation of a previous contribution and a comment on it. This invitation is followed by a series of contributions from other children: some questions (turns 2, 6 and 8) and one comment (turn 4), all responded directly by the child who is telling the story (F1). The facilitator joins the children with a question (turn 11), which enhances a long answer.

Example 4

1. FAC: Oh wow. So, we have a huge story from this picture. I was going to ask you actually why did you choose it but I think I know, I think I can see loads of happy memories coming out of it, out of your picture, loads of them. **Does anybody want to ask about the picture, about**

anything they can see in the picture, about memories, has anybody got any questions that you might like to ask?

2. M: ((Points to picture)) How old were you?
3. F1: I think two and half.
4. F2: You look massive.
5. F1: I know.
6. F2: Did you do your hair up on that day?
7. F1: No, I just brushed like crazy. I had my head upside down.
8. M: Was it like a traditional dance you did?
9. F1: No, I was doing my shaking
10. ((Laughter))
11. FAC: Is that that you brought in, is that anything to do with it?
12. F1: ((Holds up folder and points to various things inside)) Yeah, that's part of what I got from the goody bag. Someone gave it to me and it's like a folder, and I can just put my personal stuff inside, and this bit he's an elephant god called Ganesh and he (?) and these are silk fabric. And sometimes in weddings you will see these two people, which is (?) and when they got married that's a part of the celebration. So, at that time we celebrated the wedding, the groom and bride were doing a dance of this music but I was doing the wrong music

Inviting to add and expand can be addressed both classmates and the child who is telling a story. In example 3, the invitation to expand follows a non-verbal signal (raising hand). The child who raised her hand asks a question to the child who is narrating and the latter answers to the question. In example 5, the facilitator links her invitation to the previous narrative about a wedding, asking if other children have attended weddings. As many children try to answer to this invitation, the facilitator expands her invitation by identifying a specific child, with the support of the teller (F1). M1 starts to expand the narrative.

Example 5

1. FAC: It sounds really (..) has anybody else here been to a wedding?
2. ((Classroom all talks at once))
3. FAC: Who wants to share with me about their wedding favourite experiences? Who can remember going to a wedding and share something about it. ((F1 points to people in class))
4. M1: I was at a wedding and you know the platform they go to to get married

In example 6, the invitation to expand is addressed to the child who is telling the story. After two questions, which clarify the general setting of the story (turns 1 and 3), the facilitator invites F9 to expand her story of the Moroccan feast (turn 5). As in example 3, the child starts to expand the narrative.

Example 6

1. FAC: ma questa fotografia in che occasione è stata fatta?
But in what occasion was this picture taken?
2. F9: in una festa in Marocco
During a feast in Morocco
3. FAC: una festa in Marocco (.) e: quindi la particolarità di questa foto è tipica (.) del paese: dove vivevano i tuoi?
A feast in Morocco (.) and: so the peculiarity of this photo is typical (.) of the country where your parents used to live?
4. F9: sì
Yes
5. FAC: ci puoi raccontare questa: questa vicenda? In cui: hai fatto questa foto te la ricordi?
Can you tell us about this: this occasion? In which: you took that photo do you remember it?
6. F9: e: sì e: ero: cioè mia madre l'ha fatta perché dovevamo darla a mio padre (.) che era in Italia
E: yes e: I was: well my mother took it because we had to give it to my father (.) who was in Italy

A variety of actions can enhance children's narratives, in different situations, such as presenting a photograph and its description, adding further elements to the ongoing narrative, involving classmates to expand with new narratives, or to ask for more details about the ongoing narrative. Against this background, it can be useful to combine different types of invitations, regarding presentation, additional elements, expansions and questions. In example 7, the facilitator firstly invites M1 to present (turn 1), then she invites M1 to add further details (turns 5 and 11), finally she invites other children to ask (turn 25). F1 takes the floor to ask a question.

Example 7

1. FAC: So, there's been some extra pictures and we've got lots on here that we're going to look at in a minute, but one special one from up here. Do you want to hold it up because it's not on the screen. There you go. **Okay and can you tell us a bit about it?**
2. M1: ((smiles)) This was in St James's Park and my dad bought me an ice cream and then when I was eating it, it got all over my mouth.
3. FAC: It went all over everywhere. St James's Park in London?
4. M1: Yeah.
5. FAC: Okay and last week you were really excited about wanting to bring in a picture, didn't you, you said to us you're going to definitely bring in a picture this week to share **and why did you choose that one?**
6. M1: Because it reminds me of how I was when I was really young.
7. FAC: And how do you think you looked when you were smaller?
8. M1: ((Smiles nervously)) I'm not sure.
9. FAC: You're not sure. Well you look like you're enjoying your ice cream.
10. M1: Yeah.
11. FAC: **And do you want to share with us anything else about the picture?**
12. M1: I was four years old, I think, and my mum took this picture.
13. FAC: And (..) does it bring back some special memories?
14. M1: Yeah.
15. FAC: What sort of memories does it bring back?
16. M1: It brings back how fun it was eating it.
17. FAC: And anything else?
18. M1: ((Smiles)) My family was laughing.
19. FAC: They are. So who else was with you?
20. M1: It was my mum, my dad and my uncle.
21. FAC: And can you remember back to that day or do you
22. M1: I remember.
23. FAC: You do, so it's your own memory of it. And what was the best, best thing of the day, do you think?
24. M1: ((Smiles warmly)) Eating the ice cream.
25. FAC: So you like ice cream? **Would you like to share anything else about your picture or would anybody like to ask you, does anybody want to ask?**
26. F1: ((Smiles)) What flavour ice cream was it?

It is important to add that problems can arise when the invitation is too general, and thus expansions are not sufficiently oriented, or when it is too specific, and thus the topic of the expansion cannot be shared or valued as interesting by the other children.

3. Questions

The examples in Section 2 show that questions are very useful to enhance the production of narratives. Different types of questions are frequently combined to facilitate the production of narratives. Through this combination, facilitators can become co-tellers of narratives, supporting their production.

There are two important aspects in asking questions: (1) the way of starting a sequence of questions, and (2) the way in which different types of questions are chained in this sequence. The SHARMED experience shows that **focused questions** seems to be more frequent than **open questions**. Questions are focused when they aim

to enhance a short answer, such as a yes or no, or a choice between two alternatives. This does not imply that the answer will be short, but that the question invites a short answer. Questions are open when they suggest expanded answers, as they do not provide any suggestion about possible answers (such as a yes/no, or possible alternatives). Open questions can more easily enhance the expansion of narratives.

Open questions are certainly useful to invite children to develop their narratives. However, open questions may be followed by focused questions, used to check and clarify the ongoing narratives. In example 8, the first open question (turn 2) aims to clarify the child's feeling about her certificate of birth, which she has presented in turn 1. Rather than responding, the child starts to tell an episode linked to this certificate (turn 3). The facilitator asks a series of focused questions, checking some details about this episode (turns 4, 6, 8 and 10). This series of focused questions supports the development of the child's narrative.

Example 8

1. F1: This shows my name, my date of birth and how much I weigh (..) I look at it now and I didn't weigh that much
2. FAC: No (..) and **how does it make you feel to look at your kind of certificate of birth to say this (..) here I am, I'm here, this is the day I was born on, the eighth of November**
3. F1: Um, I remember one thing, once I was in my room and then um, my sister was there and then I said am I really alive and then she got this and she said yes you're alive because if you weren't alive, you wouldn't have this
4. FAC: That's true (..) **and how old were you when you when you said this to your sister? When did that happen?**
5. F1: When I was four I think
6. FAC: **and do you remember that? Do you remember it? Do you remember saying that? So the certificate saying that to your sister am I alive and she said you must be because you've got your birth certificate (..) cool (..) I wonder if she remembers that, your sister**
7. F1: Yeah (..) she um she, she teases me because of that
8. FAC: **What, she thinks it's funny that you asked if you were alive?**
9. F1: ((nods))
10. FAC: **and how old is your sister?**
11. F1: Twelve

The importance of focused questions to clarify and check is also evident when combined to open questions, which enhance the expansion of narratives. In example 9, the facilitator asks two focused questions (turns 1 and 3) to check the way in which the photograph was taken, then he expands the narrative through two open questions (turns 5 and 7) about the reasons of the child's choice. Finally, he asks three focused questions to clarify the child's habits about taking photographs.

Example 9

1. FAC: **ma questa foto che hai scattato alla mamma (.) hai deciso tu la p- dove sei? (.) hai deciso tu la posa in cui si doveva mettere la mamma o la mamma si è messa in posa da sola?**
But this picture that you took to your mum (.) did you decide the e- where are you? (.) did you de- did you decide the exposure in which your mum should stay or did your mum exposed herself.
2. M5: io l'ho messa
I did it
3. FAC: **hai deciso tu?**
Did you decide?
4. M5: sì
yes
5. FAC: **e come mai hai scelto questa posa?**
And how did you choose this exposure?
6. M5: e::
7. FAC: **cioè c'è un motivo per cui l'hai fatta sedere così:?**

- I mean is there any reason for exposing her sitting in that way?*
8. M5: no è la mamma che tipo si è: (.) che si è messa in posa e: (.) io ho fatto la foto
No it is my mum who well did (.) that exposed herself and: (.) I took the photo
9. FAC: ma era la prima volta che facevi una foto alla mamma?
But was that the first time you took a picture to the your mum?
10. M5: no
11. FAC: **ti capita spesso di farle?**
Does it happen frequently that you take them?
12. M5: delle volte
Sometimes
13. FAC: **e in che altre occasioni: l'hai fotografata?**
In which other situations did you took a picture of her?
14. M5: in casa, fuori casa, (.) alle feste, (.) ai matrimoni
At home, outside my house, at the parties (.) at weddings
15. FAC: quindi te [fai sempre le foto alla mamma
So, you always take picture to your mum
- M5: [in chiesa (he shrugs his shoulders and extends one
harm))
[in church
16. FAC: **ma solo alla mamma o fai anche altre fotografie?**
But only to your mum ar do you also take other pictures?
17. M5: gli scrivo i messaggi
I write messages to her

In example 10, the facilitator checks a detail about the photograph (turn 1), then she expands on seasons in the child's country (turn 4). After this expansion, she checks further details about the season (turns 7, 9 and 11), finally asking two additional focused questions on the mosque represented in the photograph (turns 13 and 15).

Example 10

1. FAC: mhmh ((zu F7)) und **welche Jahreszeit ist das, das Foto? Weißt du das?**
mm-hm ((to F7)) and what season is it, in the photo? Do you know?
2. F7: mh ((shakes head))
3. M12: im Januar ((lacht))
January ((laughs))
4. FAC: **welche Jahreszeiten gibt's denn bei euch?**
what seasons do you have there?
5. Child: ((sneezes))
6. Others: Gesundheit
bless you
7. FAC: **ist das so wie hier in Deutschland?**
is it like here in Germany?
8. ((F7 nods))
9. FAC: **und gibt's auch richtig Winter?**
and is it real winter, too?
10. F7: °°ja°°
°°yes°°
11. FAC: **gibt es Schnee?**
does it snow?
12. F7: °° ja°°
°°yes°°
13. FAC: ok, schön (.) und ich hab auch noch ne Frage. **Wenn da nur Männer und Jungs rein dürfen. Hast du das dann bisher nur als Foto gesehen? Oder durftest du auch schon mal irgendwo in eine Moschee?**
okay, great (.) and I have another question. If only men and boys are allowed in, did you only

- see that as a photograph? Or were you also able to go into a mosque somewhere?
14. F7: °°ja, doch auch°°
°°yes, that too°°
15. FAC: **ja?**
yes?
16. F7: °°ja das ist Mädchen, wo Mädchen gehen und [lernen]°°
°°yes that is girl, where girl go and [study]°°

Series of questions are particularly effective when focused questions and open questions are combined and alternated. This combination allows to check and clarify, on the one hand, and to enhance expansions, on the other. In example 11, the alternation is between groups of questions: three focused questions are followed by four open questions. The facilitator starts with a focused question to clarify how F1 would define her father. This is further checked in turns 3 and 5. From turn 9, and then in turns 11, 17 and 21, the facilitator asks open questions, first to enhance an expansion about the relations between F1 and her parents, then to explore some episodes of this relation. Turn 17 is technically a focused question, but the facilitator's intention is clearly to expand and the question is understood by F1 as open.

Example 11

1. FAC: **è un amico che: insomma: è più papà o più amico?**
He is a friend that, in short is he more a dad or a friend?
2. F1: più papà
More dad
3. FAC: **più papà?**
More dad?
4. F1: sì
Yes
5. FAC: **e quando gli chiedi di uscire cosa ti: (2.0) non fare cavolate [come al tuo amico?**
And when you ask him to go out what does (2.0) don't do stupid things as to your friend?
6. F1: [hh] no:
usciamo insieme ma di più prende esce con mio fratello e quindi
we go out together but more frequently he goes out with my brother and so
7. FAC: fanno delle uscite da tra maschi
They go out as males
8. F1: sì
yes
9. FAC: **ah e tu invece con chi esci?**
Ah and instead with whom do you go out?
10. F1: con la mamma di più: ma: non così tanto né con la mamma ma di più con il papà diciamo
More with my mum but not so much neither with my mum but more with my dad let's say.
11. FAC: **mh e quando uscite insieme che cosa vi piace fare?**
Mh and when you go out what do you like to do?
12. F1: o andiamo al cinema, (.) o andiamo fuori con papà a fare a fare delle passeggiate, poi gli dico tutte le mie cose (.) non così tante ma quelle che non le dico alla mamma le dico al papà
either we go to the cinema (.) or we go out with dad for some beautiful walks, the I say him all my things (.) not so many but those that I don't tell to my mum, I say to my dad
13. FAC: in modo che [se loro si scambiano le informazioni [sanno tutto di te
So that if they exchange their information they know everything about you
14. F1: [sì] [hh]
[yes]
15. FAC: **eh?**
16. F1: quasi hh
almost hh
17. FAC: **ho capito h e: e: c'è una una una vicenda una volta particolare in cui è accaduto che ti ricordi (.) che: (3.0) è stato un momento per te importante del di un'uscita?**

I understand and and there is one one event once particular in which it happened that you remember (.) that (3.0) there has been an important moment in going out for you

18. F1: ((she bends her head on one side))
19. FAC: no
20. F1: una volta di nascosto sono uscita con mio padre hh
once I went out with my father secretly hh
21. FAC: **di nascosto da chi?**
Secretly from whom?
22. F1: hh io e mio padre perché mia mamma non voleva
Hh I and my father because my mum did not want

In example 12, the facilitator starts with a focused question to check M1's assessment of the party that the child mentioned in turn 1. This question is followed by an open question (turn 4), by a new focused question to check the meaning of the child's answer (turn 6) and by a new open question, which explores the meaning of the child's story (turn 8). This exploration continues with another open question (turn 12), followed by a focused question (turn 14) to check further details of the story. The following two open questions promote an expansion on the nature of the party (turns 19 and 23), while the final focused question (turn 25) supports the child's answer to the second open question. This example shows how focused questions can be used both as a way of introducing open questions and as a way of supporting children's answers to open questions.

Example 12

1. M1: That's my favorite toy and it reminds me of my favorite toy. I still have it. I use it as a decoration and it also reminds me of the time I went to a party, it was really fun.
2. FAC: **Was it a good party?**
3. M1: Yeah.
4. FAC: **What can you remember from it, what's your biggest memory from the party?**
5. M1: ((Hand over face)). A food fight.
6. FAC: **A food fight, at the party?**
7. M1: Yeah.
8. FAC: **And can I ask who started it?**
9. M1: ((Hand over face, laughing)) Another (..) I had another friend, he came and he threw a piece of cake at someone and the person threw it back
10. ((Laughter))
11. M1: And then a few more people started and then everyone started doing it.
12. FAC: **Was there a lot of people at the party and what did the adults do when this food fight started?**
13. M1: The adults hid behind the wall.
14. FAC: **Did you get any of the adults with the cake?**
15. M1: No.
16. FAC: They were safe, okay.
17. M1: I nearly hit my mum.
18. ((Laughter))
19. FAC: And do you remember (..) **can I ask what was the party for?**
20. M1: can't remember.
21. F1: Was it like a tradition?
22. M1: Yeah.
23. FAC: **Where was it taken?**
24. M1: In (..) I can't remember. I was just like four, five.
25. FAC: **Were you in the UK, was that in England, was that in the UK?**
26. M1: Yeah.

4. Final reflections

Invitations to tell and questions to support narratives cooperate in the active enhancement of narratives. Invitations are frequently questions, used to start narratives, to add to and expand on narratives, to ask questions to the teller. While open questions can be useful to invite a child to start to tell a story, focused questions can be used to support the development of the story. The frequent use of focused questions is based on the necessity to clarify and check children's narratives, which can be rather fragmented. However, focused questions alone rarely enhance complex narratives: therefore, they cannot be used alone or for a long time. Combinations of different ways of inviting and combinations of focused and open questions are important strategies of enhancing narratives effectively. In this Policy Brief we have introduced the first important feature of facilitation: the choice among types of invitations and questions, and the ways of combining these types.

While questions can be used both to facilitate the production of a narrative, and to support clarification of narratives, only or prevalently using questions for a long time is risky as it can show insistence, rather than desire to explore and expand children's narratives.