

Children's Rights and Lives – Coincidences at Play: A Teaching Kit

Name of organization:
Danish Institute for Human Rights

Coincidences at Play

consists of:

- > Pajul Brahmata's story
- > Fundamental Law of the Children of the World
- > Teachers' Guide
- > Audio Tape
- > Video
- > Dia Slide Series
- > Photos

Coincidences at Play

A teaching material on children's rights and conditions in developing countries and in Denmark

1. edition, 1. issue

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Teachers' Guide

Introduction and Contents

Introduction

“Coincidences at Play” is a teaching material on children’s conditions and rights. It is coincidental where in the world a child is born and which living conditions it gets. But no matter whether children grow up in the developing world or in Denmark they have the possibility of playing a role of their own, of making some choices of their own, and attempting to change their situation. With offset in The Convention on the Rights of the Child, the participants examine what the needs of children are at different places in the world, if their rights are violated, and what it takes to a higher degree to ensure that children’s rights and needs are complied with.

The main elements of the material are as follows:

Contents

The teaching kit contains:

- Teacher/instructor guide with material for copying
- 30 dia-slides of children in the world
- 30 colour copy pictures of children in the world
- 1 audiotape with music to the dia-series
- Pajul Brahmata’s story – 25 pamphlets
- The fundamental law of the children of the world – U.N.’s Declaration on the Rights of the Child – 12 pamphlets
- Material for copying:
 - the Needs Pyramid by Claus Deleuran
 - Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid
 - Bolette’s story
- 1 videotape
 - Why, cartoon (National Film Board of Canada) (8,53 minutes)
 - Pajul’s story (approximately 4 minutes)
 - Interview with Lars Petersen, director of Select Sport (4,45 minutes)
 - Interview with Birk Christensen, Børns Vilkår (Children’s Circumstances) (4 minutes)
 - Interview with Anette Faye Jacobsen, The Danish Centre for Human Rights, and Susanne Glending, Save the Children (5 minutes)

In the following, a possible use of the material is outlined.

First Part

1. A dia-series on children in the world – the students choose their own version of the series and write text for the pictures chosen.
2. “Why” – a cartoon on children’s conditions and what can be done to improve them.
3. “Pajul Brahmata’s story” – the students follow a child worker’s story and compare it to The Convention on the Rights of the Child and make strategies for Pajul’s further destiny.

Second Part

4. Evaluation practice on Danish children’s conditions.
5. Role play: “Bolette’s story” – the class attempts to solve Bolette’s problems and compares Danish children’s conditions and rights with those of children in the developing world.

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Children's conditions and rights – outside Europe

“This is departure for the world!”

As an introduction to *Coincidences at Play*, the students can work on an assignment that shows a little on the distribution of the world's population and resources. A description can be found in *Idékatalog til Klode 95* (Idea Catalogue to Planet 95) published by MS Danish Association for International Co-operation. The assignment is titled: “This is departure for the world.”

The students are spread on five parts of the world according to the size of their populations. The differences in the areas of the five parts are shown by an uneven number of desks. In a class of 25 students, for instance, a distribution of 13 Asiatics by five desks and 3 Africans by six desks will take place. The distribution of food shows for instance 1/10 for two Latin Americans and 3/10 for five Europeans. Foodstuffs can be distributed as cakes to illustrate the unfair distribution. Furthermore, differences in children's death rate, energy consumption, and gross domestic product can be indicated.

Dia-series on the children of the world

The series consists of 30 pictures that show children from countries outside Europe. (Appendix 1 shows from which countries the pictures stem.) Underscore music to the pictures is played. The tape lasts 5 minutes. That means that there is 10 seconds of music per picture. When the students have seen the dia-pictures the according paper-pictures are spread on the floor. The students choose one picture each, which they are to write a short text to. The size could be 10 lines. When the students have chosen their pictures, the dia-series is edited so that only the pictures chosen remain. After the students have written their texts, the edited dia-series is shown without music but with the students' texts. Of course one could choose to let the students work in pairs and limit to one picture per pair.

Now you are to see a dia-series with children from the whole world outside Europe. Notice the picture, because afterwards you are to choose one picture and write a short text to it.

After the dia-series is shown, the paper-pictures are spread out on the floor.

Now you are to choose one picture each and write a text to it. The text should be of about 10 lines. You can tell about the situation you believe the child or the children in the picture is/are in, how you think they live, what possibilities they have a.o. You may use your imagination or write something you have heard about children in the world if it can fit to the picture. First you see the series with music. When I show the dia-series once more you are to read your text aloud when your picture appears on the screen.

The teacher collects the pictures not chosen and removes the according dia-pictures from the series.

When the dia-series has been shown second time and all the texts have been read aloud, the pictures and texts can be discussed.

What does those pictures you have seen show, and the stories you have heard about children's conditions in the world today?

Which conditions have your heard about or watched on television, in movies or read about in newspapers?

If the class has worked on the assignment "This is departure for the world," some of these conditions can be drawn into the conversation.

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Children's conditions and rights – outside Europe

WHY?

The cartoon stems from Canada and is part of a series on children's rights and conditions around the world (produced by National Film Board of Canada). This film tells about children's dreams and visions, and how they can burst and go down the drain. However, how one can act is also depicted. The film can be supplemented with and broadened to the conversation that has taken place after the dia-pictures.

What does the film wish to tell?

What are the main problems for children in the world today?

Which possibilities exist to improve children's conditions and ensure their rights?

What do you know about the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

Pajul's story

This activity is meant to be a group assignment. The story is introduced with a video spot that shows pictures from a fictive country in southeastern Asia, where Pajul's story takes place. The text to the story for the country as well as to Pajul's story is in the students' pamphlet "Pajul Brahmata's story."

The students are handed this pamphlet and "The Fundamental Law of the Children of the World," which is a popularized and shortened version of the U.N.'s Convention on the Rights of the Child. Furthermore, each group gets an A4-sheet with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid, where the entered numbers refer to the according articles in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (master for copying, appendix 2). Besides the simple needs pyramid the teachers' guide provides a master for copying (appendix 3) of Claus Deleuran's version. That can be gone through first as an introduction to the terms of the Needs Pyramid.

Here you see a pyramid, where the human needs are noted, from the basic needs as hunger and thirst to the top, where our needs for creative development and other forms of fulfilling oneself are noted. In the distributed needs pyramid, these words are mentioned. Furthermore, some numbers are put down. They are connected to the articles in the pamphlet "The Fundamental Law of the Children of the World," which is

a shortened version of the U.N.'s Convention on the Rights of the Child. Now you are in groups to go through the different articles in the pamphlet. Every time you come across an article that you believe is violated in Pajul's story you put a circle around the number of that article in the needs pyramid. If you can't remember the whole story from the video spot, the story is also printed in the pamphlet: "Pajul Brahmata's story."

When the groups have put circles around the numbers on the needs pyramid, a collection of the students' assessment can take place on a transparent of the needs pyramid. A red circle can be put around those articles on which the groups agree have been violated. A green circle is put in cases of minority assessments. Here too a discussion can take place of understanding and interpretation of the articles in relation to the story.



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is shown above. The pyramid illustrates the five levels of human needs. The most basic are physiological and safety/security, shown at the base of the pyramid. As one moves to higher levels of the pyramid, the needs become more complex.

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Children's conditions and rights - outside Europe

You have heard about Pajul's story through the social worker, who will try to help him. Now you can influence the choices the social worker must make on Pajul's behalf. At page four in the pamphlet "Pajul Brahmata's story," the assignment is described. You meet four different people, whom the social worker seeks out. After each meeting, the social worker makes some considerations and must make a choice. Those choices you are to help with. This way the groups can happen to read different pages of the story. Each group is to read four pages – thus not the whole pamphlet. No matter how you choose, you land at page 20, where some concluding assignments are found, which you are to talk about in the groups. You need to use your knowledge on the country and on Pajul's story, when you now start choosing for the social worker and thus also for Pajul. What might Pajul's immediate future happen to be?

After finishing the teamwork, the choices, and plans, and the reasons for these are presented to the class. The presentations can be followed by a discussion on the realism of the story, and on which possible actions exist.

*How realistic are your plans for Pajul's future according to your knowledge of the developing world?
Which organizations help children?
What can we do to help?*

Interview with Lars Petersen, director of Select Sport

You are to seek an interview with the director of Select Sport in Denmark. The company has soccer balls produced in Pakistan but are not employing children like Pajul. Only grown-ups work for the company. Select Sport supports school attendance for the employees' children.

After the interview, different forms of help and support can be discussed.

*What do you think of this way to prevent child labor?
Have you heard of other ways?
Is a boycott of these products a good idea?*

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Danish children's conditions and rights

Assessment practice

In order to move the students' focus from Pajul's story in a southeast Asiatic country to Bollette's story in Denmark, three suggestions for assessment practice follow here. Of course, it is not necessary to use all three.

After having engaged in children's rights and conditions around the world we are now to try examining Danish children's rights and conditions.

Assessment exercise with show of hands

If you agree with the statement, then raise your hand, if not, don't raise your hand.

- Danish parents are too busy.
- Danish children spend too much time in institutions.
- Public school is boring.
- Danish children watch television a lot.
- Danish children need to spend more time with their parents.
- Danish children's rights are not violated.
- Danish children are among the happiest in the world.
- Danish children's conditions could be better.
- Many Danish children abuse alcohol.
- Many Danish children commit suicide.

Take a stand

The numbers one through six are put on the floor with suitable distance.

If you quite agree with the statement – Danish children are well – you stand by number one. If you quite agree to the statement – Danish children are unwell – you stand by number six. If you almost agree to one of the statements you stand by two or five, and so on.

When the students have taken their stands, ask them then to argue why they have made their decision.

Four-corner exercise

What is the worst for Danish children?

- a. The parents are too busy to take care of them.
- b. Material things are of too high importance.
- c. Children are not challenged enough.
- d. Open Corner.

If you believe the worst for Danish children to be that the parents are too busy to take care of them, stand then in corner a, and so on. If you have another answer than a, b or c, stand in the open corner.

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Danish children's conditions and rights

Video spot

In the videotape is an interview with Birk Christensen from Børns Vilkår (Children's Circumstances). He briefly tells about the organization and how he believes the situation of Danish Children is. The spot can be played at this point in the course.

Role play

Master for copying pages q, x, y, z

Bolette's divorce

Now we are to look closer at a Danish girl's circumstances and rights by use of a role play. The characters are Bolette, Bolette's mother and father, and Bolette's class teacher(s). Bolette's parents were divorced a couple of years ago. Bolette's father quickly moved in together with a younger woman and her two children. Until now Bolette has lived alternately with the parents one week at a time, but that agrees very badly with her. Actually, she has moved in with a friend, and her class teacher has summoned the family for a talk, because things are going badly at school.

In groups of four to five, you now are to play respectively Bolette, Bolette's father, Bolette's mother and Bolette's class teacher. You are at a meeting at the school and are to attempt finding a solution to the problems. When the parts are distributed each of you gets a piece of paper with a description of your impression of the situation.

The parts are distributed, four to five persons in each group: Bolette, Bolette's mother, Bolette's father, Bolette's class teacher(s). One of the class teachers tries to manage the conversation and find a solution to the problems. The other teachers are an assistant, observer, and the one who writes down the action plan. All groups simultaneously act through the play. Perhaps the groups are placed in different rooms. The play is ended by each group finding a suggestion for solution/a plan of action that the teacher/second teacher writes down.

Plenum

Each group present its' results – the suggestions are discussed in plenum. It's a good idea to sit in a circle.

Hereafter is discussed as a group: Which rights are violated and what are the needs of Bolette?

Briefly discuss in the groups with outset in the U.N.'s Convention on the Rights of the Child, note and present in plenum: In which areas are Danish children's rights violated.

Video spot

In the video spot is an interview with Anette Faye Jacobsen from The Danish Centre for Human Rights and Susanne Glending from Save the Children. They briefly tell about their view on Danish children's rights. The spot can be played at this point in the course.

Concluding discussion

Briefly discuss in the groups, take note, and present ideas in plenum:

*How will you bring up your children to be, what will you stress in the upbringing?
Where can one turn to, if one has problems as a child or a youth in Denmark today?*

Included is a folder from Children's Circumstances that perhaps can be used here.

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Photo list

Appendix 1 – for free copying

01. Sulawesi, Indonesia
02. Los Angeles, USA
03. Harare, Zimbabwe
04. Bangkok, Thailand
05. Amman, Jordan
06. Sulawesi, Indonesia
07. Temuco, Chile
08. Jaipur, India
09. Azraq, Jordan
10. Agra, India
11. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
12. Temuco, Chile
13. Siberut, Indonesia
14. Karagwe, Tanzania
15. Varanasi, India
16. Sulawesi, Indonesia
17. Chichicastenango, Guatemala
18. Arusha, Tanzania
19. Seattle, USA
20. Queensland, Australia
21. Kagera, Tanzania
22. Tegucigalpa, Honduras
23. Karagwe, Tanzania
24. Khajuraho, India
25. Fortuna, Costa Rica
26. Sumatra, Indonesia
27. Aswan, Egypt
28. Barra del Colorado, Costa Rica
29. Easter Island
30. Lago de Nicaragua, Nicaragua

Photos: Poul Erik Christoffersen, 7 and 12
Torben Ulrik Nissen, all the others



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is shown above. The pyramid illustrates the five levels of human needs. The most basic are physiological and safety/security, shown at the base of the pyramid. As one moves to higher levels of the pyramid, the needs become more complex.

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Appendix 3 – for copying on Overhead

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Bolette Kristiansen's story

Appendix 4 – for free copying

You are 15 years old. You are a pretty, somewhat slight girl. Your eyes are sad, but you seem mature and sure of yourself. You are a child of divorced parents and feel as if being thrown back and forth between your parents. Therefore you have approached the municipality and the children's phone for help. The following is a summary of your story:

You were 13 when your parents were divorced. It came as somewhat of a shock. You had always believed that precisely your parents loved one another and were responsible. There was something fierce or mixed-up to it. Of course it was all violently tragic, and even though you had indeed had a notion that something was wrong you were totally taken by surprise when your beautiful mother and clever father suddenly one day sat down opposite you and calmly, relaxed, and competently told you about their decision and all its' positive consequences. "You may cry," you recall your mother saying. You always thought that was one of the most ridiculous things she ever said.

In the moment the bomb erupted you realized that they were exactly as irresponsible as all other parents that have been divorced. They had grown apart they said. Which meant that your father had found someone else. But you just think that they ran away from their responsibility to their life with you as a family.

Your parents agreed that they wouldn't fight over you. In effect that meant that you got to live one week by one and one week by the other. You had to get used to new grown-ups, a stepmother and new siblings with a totally different upbringing from yours. The place you felt most at home was on your bike between your two homes. There you could find time to think, to be yourself. Anyhow, you adjusted and did your best to feel at home and fall into the rhythm. But inside you carry the burden of some knot that never got undone. You were never put in a position to choose, where you could decide for yourself whether you wish to live with your father or mother and thus get a proper home. For you this means that you have been put under tutelage.

The relationship between your parents got still worse – especially your mother, who had a bad habit of slandering your father. When one day you found out that she had opened a letter from your father to you without asking permission, you had had enough. You considered first asking your father if you could live permanently with him but you can't stand your stepmother, so this thought you dropped. At the moment you live with a friend who has room enough but in the longer run you don't know what to do.

Lately things hadn't gone well at school. You are not capable of doing your homework and just sit looking out the window. This your class teacher has noticed, of course. He is quite nice and has indeed gotten out of you what torments you. He has suggested summoning your parents and you for a talk to try help you sort out your life. After much pressed, you have agreed. You are still very fond of your parents and would hate to hurt them, but you can't stand going on like this either.

If you are to live with your mother it implies that she quits slandering your father, abstains from opening your mail and all in all stops living in the past and begins to create a life of her own.

If you are to live with your father you insist on being treated decently by your stepmother. She is always nagging you and treats you quite differently from how she treats her own children. Perhaps it would really be for the best to get away from it all, for instance to a continuation school, but then that is expensive.

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Bolette's father, Søren Kristiansen

Appendix 5 – for free copying

You are 39 years old. You have been married to Bettina, Bolette's mother, for 14 years. You were divorced two years ago. Together you have Bolette, who is 15. Now you live with Susanne and her two children of seven and nine in a villa. Until now Bolette has lived with you every other week, but now she has moved in with a friend.

In the beginning you and Bettina were very much in love and very happy, but by and by, the love drowned in the daily humdrum: childcare, shopping, cleaning and television watching. You believe that you grew apart. You had nothing to talk about any more, and your sex life had as good as ended. The joy and love had vanished from your relationship. Therefore, you decided to get a divorce. Perhaps hastening your decision was the fact that you met Susanne at a course and experienced wuthering love.

Before the divorce you and Bolette's mother could always talk about things. But after the divorce it is almost impossible to talk sense to her. She constantly blames you for anything possible and impossible and you have the feeling that she also pulls you to pieces towards Bolette. You don't understand at all that you could think of opening your letter for Bolette. It's very unlike her.

You decided that Bolette should stay with you in turns, one week at a time, in order for her not being forced to choose between you. This way she could also better maintain the contact with both of you.

Until recently you believed this to be the best solution for Bolette. She was always an easy and sweet girl and good at adapting to wants and demands from her surroundings. She seemed fairly happy with her new life, even though you haven't had that much time to talk with her lately, because the job and a new family take their toll.

When having taken part in bringing children to this world, one also has a duty to make sure to be two to care for them. But if Bolette's mother continues to act so unbalanced perhaps it would be better anyway if Bolette moves in permanently with you and Susanne. It's just that Bolette and Susanne find it very hard to be around each other without fighting. You don't much feel like getting into it, when you return home tired from work. Until now you thought that probably they just needed to get to know one another.

Apparently things are also bad for Bolette in school, since her class teacher has invited you, Bettina, and Bolette to a meeting to talk about Bolette's future. You really don't have the time, but have agreed, because Bolette's future is important to you. In any case it can't go on like this for sure.

You do understand that Bolette doesn't want to live with her mother any longer. She could easily live with you, provided she and Susanne could figure out how to get along together.

Lately Bolette has also talked about moving to a continuation school. That idea you don't like much. You believe that it's better for children to be with their parents. But if that really is what Bolette wants, you will accept it, provided you and Bolette's mother can share the expense.

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Bolette's mother, Bettina Møller Sørensen

Appendix 6 – for free copying

You are 38 years old. You have been married to Bolette's father, Søren, for 14 years. You were divorced two years ago. Together you have Bolette, who is 15 years old. You now live alone in a small apartment. Until now Bolette has lived with you every other week but now she has moved in with a friend.

Your husband was hardly ever at home. He said that the job took all his time but at some point he admitted to having an affair with a younger woman.

Actually, you believe it would have been most fair if Bolette had happened to stay with you. After all it is you that has taken care of her mostly, and indeed it was not you that had an affair. However, Bolette was always very fond of her father, so for fairness' sake and in order to accommodate all parties you decided that Bolette were to stay one week with each of you.

In this way she could indeed go on seeing both of you equally much. Actually, she got two families instead of one. Bolette never really was discontented but she did though grow a bit more silent and reserved. You thought that was due to adolescence.

Bolette's father also started acting so peculiar and talking degradingly of you towards Bolette. You felt it was your responsibility to see what he was up to now, so that you could put a stop to it, not least for Bolette's sake. It greatly surprised you that Bolette reacted so strongly just because you opened her letter. After all you are her mother, and it must well be your duty to protect her.

But apparently things are worse with Bolette than you had imagined, since now Bolette's class teacher has summoned you for a talk at school to attempt solving the "problems" and talk about Bolette's future. The only problems at hand, as far as you're concerned, are the ones caused by Bolette's father. You sincerely hope that Søren's new wife won't be present. She does all she can to play the part of Bolette's mother, but fortunately Bolette can't stand her, and that you actually well understand.

Of course you wish all the best for Bolette, now and in the future, but by far the best at this point certainly would be for her to permanently move in with you. Mostly you are very comfortable together, and certainly used to be able to talk confidently about many things.

In any case, it wouldn't be a good idea for Bolette to permanently move in with her father, considering the way Søren's wife treats her.

Continuation school is in my opinion out of the question. It's not a good idea and you can't afford it. If so then Bolette's father shall pay for it. He earns well but is apparently more engaged in his new family than in taking care of his daughter.

Teachers' Guide

Bolette's class teacher, Michael Skånstrøm Hansen

Appendix 7 – for free copying

You have been Bolette's class teacher since first class. You always liked her well and had a good relationship to her. She is intelligent, but is one of the sweet, quiet girls. Of course you realize that her parents are divorced, but apart from the fact that she may have grown even more silent and withdrawn than usually, it didn't seem to have an impact on Bolette.

You asked her if there was something she would like to talk to you about. She told you that her parents had been divorced, but that she didn't want to talk about it. It was nothing really, she said, so many people get divorced you know. You offered her to talk to her parents, but she wasn't interested in that, so you respected her wish.

Here in ninth class, however, it has become worse and worse. Bolette doesn't do her homework, and she just sits staring emptily into the air without paying attention. Several of her other teachers have complained to you of her missing efforts and engagement. This has made you talk to Bolette again. This time she broke down crying and told you about her problems.

After her parents' divorce she doesn't feel that she has had any influence over her life. All decisions have been made over her head. Bolette's mother, Bettina, talks badly of her father, Søren, all the time, and on top of that she has now opened a letter from Søren to Bolette. To Bolette this has been the famous drop that made the cup overflow. Therefore, she has now moved in with a friend to get time and peace to do some serious thinking.

Bolette would like to live with her father, but she doesn't at all get along with Susanne, the father's new wife, whom she feels is after her all the time, so this solution is no good just at the moment.

Bolette also considers getting away from it all, for instance by moving to a continuation school, but she doesn't know if her parents are willing to pay for that. You have suggested to Bolette having a conversation with her and her parents. This she has accepted.

You don't feel it is your task to find a solution. But by bringing the parties together and making them talk to each other they may be able to find a solution themselves. Perhaps the parents don't realize at all how Bolette feels. Therefore, your tactic is to ask Bolette talk about her feelings and problems in connection with the divorce. Maybe this can help the parents in finding a solution to the situation.