

ABSTRACT

The Good Morning Bird, the Good Night Bird: Children Painting their Experiences of Success in the Educational Landscape

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The Good Morning Bird is a phenomenological study of the experiences of success of six, grade one children in two Jamaican elementary schools. This study breaks new ground by giving voice to young children through collaborative storying between the researcher and the child-participants. The narration of the children's stories includes the voices of their teachers along with the parents of three of the children. Some of the issues central to the study are children's early self-concept (0-6 years), the four existentials of phenomenology as a way of accessing children's lifeworlds (Van Manen) and the role of education in scaffolding children's healthy psychosocial growth (Vygotsky, Erikson). The data are collected in the form of interviews, field notes, journals and drawings. They are analysed using reductive phenomenological analysis and experimental writing to arrive at the major themes and essences. Among the essences arising from the data is the understanding that five year olds do have a concept of themselves as successes and failures and that the experiences they value largely take place outside the classroom. Interviews with the teachers and parents reveal that very little positive information about the children is exchanged between the school and home. These two spheres of the children's lifeworlds remain alien to each other and divided in the task of helping children to see themselves as successful. The findings also point to the fact that there is need for a great deal of relationship building between the home and the school in order to help children negotiate the school environment successfully.

Keywords: Karen Anne Carpenter; children's success; phenomenology; collaborative storying; early childhood; psychosocial development; self-concept; home and school; relational research.