What can kids teach NECs about ethics? Listening to young people's views on assisted reproduction: an example of an extended public dialogue

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"Market place presentation"
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The Swedish National Council on Medical Ethics

Background

- The Swedish council's composition 18 members.
  - 7 members from the major political parties, 4 repr of agencies and interest groups and 4 expert members representing philosophy/medical ethics and medicine.

Working process

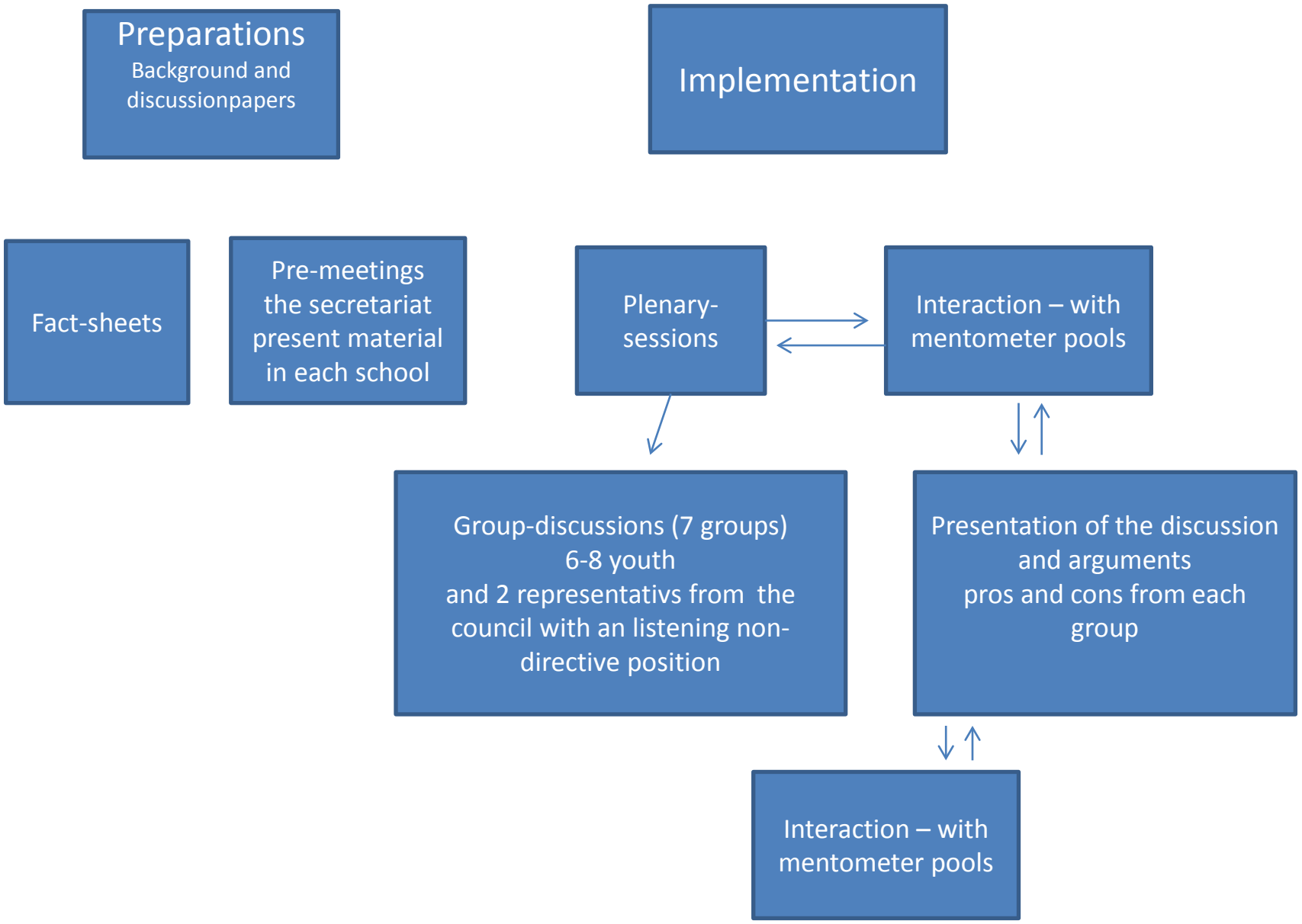
- Dialogue with experts within relevant field
- Public hearings/Conferences
- Youth dialogue: Assisted reproduction raises ethical concerns about ”welfare of the future/potential child” – why input from young people as part of the working process is of importance

Youth dialogue - why ?

- Part of working process: Ethics of ART concerns future generations / welfare of the future child
- Educational (for both council and youths/students)
  - In-depth dialoge and understanding
  - New perspectives and insights (average age of voting members of the council app. 65 years)
  - Educational /material and web-cast published on web-site
- Communication with society: transparancy, legitimacy, democracy
- Other possible effects: communicational benefits, creates interest for the council and its work, stimulates public debate and interest for ethical questions among young people

Model

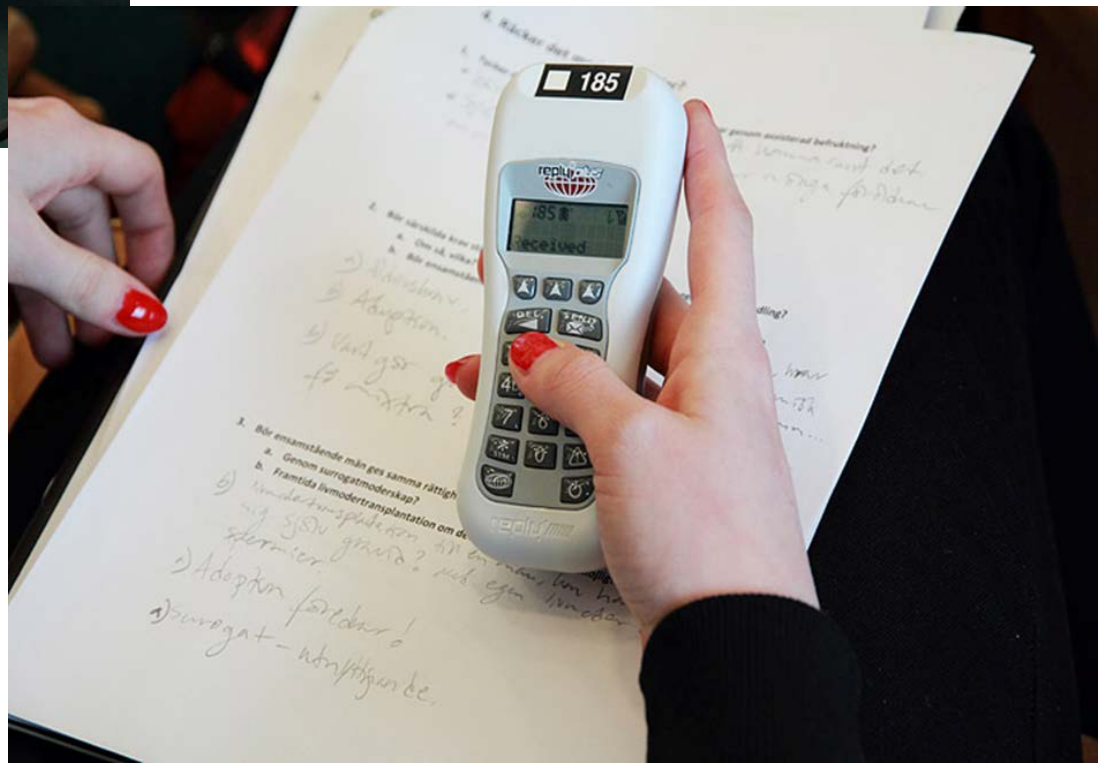
- Preparation: material, fact-sheets including ethical questions to be discussed and pre-meetings.
- Implementation: ”interactive work shop/focus group meeting with with participants from three secondary school schools (age 17-19 years) and members of youth organizations of the political parties represented in the Swedish parliament.
  - Introductory presentations external lectures/ members of council (Pleanary session)
  - Mentometer polls
  - Group discussions (6-8 students, 1-2 from council/sekr.)
  - Plenary session: Group by group presentations by students of each topic – mentometer poll. Plenary discussion.


Preparations
Background and discussionpapers
Implementation
Fact-sheets
Pre-meetings the secretariat present material in each school
Plenary-sessions
Interaction – with mentometer pools
Group-discussions (7 groups) 6-8 youth and 2 representativs from the council with an listening non-directive position
Presentation of the discussion and arguments pros and cons from each group
Interaction – with mentometer pools

Torbjörn Tännsjö, professor of philosophy and Medical Ethics

Introductory sessions

Elisabeth Rynning, professor of medical law



Interaction

Mentometer polls

Group discussions

Examples of questions and the participants' responses before and after the presentations and group discussions

Question	Before	After	Comment
Should donation of fertilized eggs be allowed in Sweden (considering the absence of genetic linkage)?	Yes 38 % No 47 % Abstain 16 %	Yes 41 % Yes 41 % Abstain 19 %	Slight shift towards more favourable attitudes after discussion.
Should we allow any form of surrogate motherhood in Sweden?	Yes 54 % No 23 % Abstain 23 %	Yes 49 % No 37 % Abstain 14 %	Some of the uncertainty transferred to negative views after discussion
Should a woman who is single be allowed to be parent by assisted reproduction?	Yes 62 % No 25 % Abstain 12 %	Yes 85 % No 14 % Abstain 2 %	Overwhelming majority after discussion