

Ødegaard, Elin Eriksen: Beyond child centeredness

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What can dialogism and intergenerational approaches offer to studies of children's cultures and institutional childhoods

This paper will question a so called child centered approach alone when studying children's participation and cultures; for example their meaning-making, playing and identity formation in institutional childhoods. The concept *generation* will be introduced as a social category of interest following Leena Alanen's (2001) suggestion of childhood as a generational condition. Generation was seen as a social category in the thesis *Narrative meaning-making in Preschool* (Ødegaard, 2007), by studying the speech genre co-narratives (child- and teacher- initiated and cooperative narratives) and further in co-operation with children and teachers exploring the uses of digital photos and narratives (Knudsen & Ødegaard, 2011). These studies made it possible to find common interests beyond age as a social category. Intergenerational approaches has been explored and developed in recent studies (Alanen 2005; Mannion, 2010; Percy-Smith, 2006; Ødegaard & Knudsen , 2012; Knudsen & Ødegaard 2012).

Following a Bakhtinian philosophy, arguments are here put forward to support the view that policy, practice and research on children's cultures participation are better framed as being essentially about child-adult *relations that are embedded in time (cronos) and space (topos) and where situation, place and artifacts are imbedded in the social practice*. Issues like identity formation, meaning-making, playing and learning depends on how children's participation as grasped and understood. A Bakhtinian dialogical philosophy offers sensitivity on how participation can be seen as relational, how relations are socially, historically and continuously shaped. Bakhtinian concepts like intertext, adressivity, answerability and chronotope (Bakhtin, 1981; Holquist, 2002) offer valuable insights.

Following a Bakhtian route, participation operates in the lived cultural world in time and place and our utterances is formed through the participants' relation to otherness. Otherthess can refer to other people, others' words and expressions. It can also, according to Per Linell, include bodily action (Linell, 2009). Jayne White argues that dialogism has the potential to open up new pathways to explore ECE programs by valuing difference and aesthetic pedagogical practice (White, 2009). A word, action or certain practice is according to Bakhtinian philosophy always already embedded in a history of expressions by others in a chain of ongoing cultural and political moments. "Any understanding of live speech, a live utterance, is inherently responsive...//... Any utterance is a link in the chain of communication." (Bakhtin, 1986: 68, 84)

Dialogic expression and practice could be said to be continuously incomplete, and productive of further chains of responses. When meaning is seen as never closed and always oriented toward the future there is solid ground to study children's culture and childhoods as intergenerational (relational). The paper will give examples of designs where teachers and children are considered as co-players, co-citizens, co-learners and co-narrators that weave social practice within a wider political and material field.

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