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**Abstract**

In 2018 a new, more inclusive, concept of preschool education was adopted in Serbia with plans to implement the change from September 2019 to 2022. Three researchers (from different disciplines) examined how the national reform in Early Childhood Education (ECE) was perceived by Hungarian kindergarten pedagogues. To understand the impact this change has on both kindergarten pedagogues and children, we investigated two focus points i) how the participants understood the new Curriculum Framework, and ii) how the intersection of culture, language, and ethnicity are mobilised to construct the future practice. Our findings show uncertainty, resistance and sentient ways educators interpret the new programme. Findings also demonstrated many kindergarten pedagogues applied a reflexive method of professional practice that remained unchanged for decades. Our recommendation is that such a significant transition should be a slower process with greater opportunities to access professional training.

Speech

In 2018 a new, more inclusive, concept of preschool education was adopted in Serbia with plans to implement the change from September 2019 to 2022. Three researchers (from different disciplines) examined how the national reform in Early Childhood Education (ECE) was perceived by Hungarian kindergarten pedagogues. To understand the impact this change has on both kindergarten pedagogues and children, we investigated two focus points i) how the participants understood the new Curriculum Framework, and ii) how the intersection of culture, language, and ethnicity are mobilised to construct the future practice.

The historically produced theoretical bricolage in narrative research is largely responsible for the current wide variability in how researchers conceptualize what is narrative, how to study it and why is important as material, method or route to understand social phenomena. Commonly accepted focus is on spoken recounting of particular past events or events centred narratives that happened and this is what Labov’s work is about. Another way to see narrative research encompasses varying media such as letters, photo, visual material (space mattering) but these are still are event-based narrations. The involvement of the researcher does not involve event centeredness but co-constructed where stories are expressions of internal cognitive or affective states and it views narratives as a form of social code – dialogically constructed as Bakhtin 1981 would argue.

I want to pause here to argue that the concept of “dialogical self ” is actually crucial to understanding the narratives … going back to the project, to explore how Hungarian kindergarten pedagogues understand the new curriculum framework and make sense of ‘self’ and ‘other’- Buitelaar’s (2006) concept of the ‘dialogical self’ comes as a helpful tool. This approach affords a way of exploring the intersection between Hungarian kindergarten pedagogues lived experiences and how these might both exemplify and counter master narratives. Buitelaar (2006) suggests that people shift between their different I-positions telling stories about their past, and present as a way of making sense of their lives. So the narratives were generally PREDICTIONS of the event that may occur. They know that the event – the date and time when the new curriculum approach is to be introduced – is definitely coming.

These kindergarten pedagogues actually spoke from multiple positions – that of a professional worker, being part of the Hungarian ethnic minority group, and role they will need to fulfil at work. An analysis of dialogical self and in fact the I-positions affords how individual voices may, or may not conflict or how one voice or collective voice may dominate. This understanding of a ‘dialogical self’ draws on the work of Hermans (2001: 248) and I quote here, ‘self’ is contextualized as a “dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous I-positions” moving between different longitudinal and 3D positions in time and situation. I would draw attention to the word ‘relatively autonomous’ as this is discursive itself. As Richard Ware would say – this could be classed as ‘rhetoric of fictionality’ who developed a view of narrative cognition as a fundamental mode of human sense-making.

Going back to Hermans who claims that understanding what ‘dialogical self’ is, it is important to understand that we, as humans, live not only in external space, but also in internal space where an ‘embodied self’ is located in a variety of positions. And we arrive to embodied narratology which I am really interested in. The emphasis is therefore, the narrative identities that tend to be constructed through several narrative voices rather than through one unified and coherent storyline. In other words, the self is ‘multi-voiced’ creating alternative perspectives on the world and self (Hermans, 2001: 250). This approach enables narratives to be put in dialogue with each other and to understand the ways in which dialogues operate between the personal and the surrounding social world that “produce, consume, silence and contest” realities (Esin et al., 2014: 205).

So how can I as a researcher make meaning of the narratives? The following example reports on one segment of the data that is concerned with ‘future narrative’ where the concept of “dialogical self ” is applied as a fruitful approach for analysing such complex issue. In the research, particular attention is paid to collective voices, domination of social relations, and embodied forms of dialogue. Cultures and selves are seen as co-existing or ‘in dialogue’ but with increasingly sensitive to trans locality.

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