

ABSTRACT

Title: Cultural Diversity in Early Childhood Education- an ethnographic study of a preschool in a multiethnic community

Keywords: ideology; representation; articulation; identification opportunities; ethnography.

The Swedish Preschool has since the beginning of the 70s been part of immigration politics, and since the 90s part of integration politics in Sweden. In the policy documents, the preschool is defined as an arena for social and cultural interactions, aimed to strengthen the children and prepare them for a life in an increasingly internationalized society. Theoretically, this study is approached through discussions of the preschool as a societal institution. Concepts particularly at focus are: institution; ideology; representation; social and discursive practices; articulation; social and discursive positions, and those identities and identification opportunities offered or denied through such positions. These concepts in the toolbox are selected to operate together from the perspective of a Post-marxist understanding of society and its institutions. The preschool where this study is conducted is located in a multiethnic community. Methodologically an ethnographic approach is used. The study was conducted during a period of 18 months. Most of the data produced originates from observations, conversations and interviews. Additional data sources consist of photographs, schedules, policy documents, artefacts, etc.

Research questions illuminated through analyses of the data produced are: 1. In what ways are "multicultural ways of working" articulated by the pedagogues? 2. In what ways are "cultural diversity" handled by pedagogues in the preschool? 3. Which opportunities for identification are articulated in preschool activities with reference to the questions raised above?

The results are showing that "multicultural ways of working" are articulated as an objective or goal for *the others*. The results also show that the diversity in the work with the group of children, is made invisible. The cultural diversity does hence not represent an opportunity for identification, but rather is articulated as what is *different*, in relation the *normal* things taking place in daily preschool activities. One route to take in trying to change the situation appearing in the results might be to make 'intercultural education' a constant part of the teacher education program. For this to be something different than still another version of 'cultural' multiculturalism, the emphasis has to be on 'inter-', a process, the crossing of borders, and a relational understanding of a historic, social, and economic situation. The intention would be to stress the democratic commission of the higher education system, and to construct a teacher identity from values and norms where equality and respect for diversity in society constitute the foundation. These discussions should not, however, only take place in preschools and schools. The content of such a commission, what identities to be included or excluded, is something we all should feel and be responsible for. At the same time, it is important to pay attention to the fact that in today's society many people do not have the opportunities to be heard and listened to in such discussions. Without social justice, a discussion around a societal 'we', emanating from the cultural diversity of our society, will be nothing but ineffective.