

# Participation – a question of inclusion/exclusion?

Gunilla Dahlberg  
Stockholm University

Participation?

Making *discourses of participation* within educational reforms problematic

Ways of reasoning within these reforms?

. . . create spaces within which alternative discourses can be produced

# Quality assurance

Dahlberg, Moss and Pence

Beyond quality. Languages of evaluation

Dahlberg & Moss

Ethics and Politics in Early Childhood  
education

The concept of *quality* has become a powerful tool for *normalizing and control*?

For exclusion?

... is it just another way of taming children's desires?

... taming chance?

# Paradox?

Diversity

Standards

Multiplicity

Tests

Autonomy

Control

Trust/participation

Distrust?



An instrumental rationality

We “see and observe” more so called problem-children than ever! By using the normal-curve?

Classifying children as at risk and in need - a lacking child!

# New devices of governing?

“The decades of the problem child?”

Increases the variables through which the child is judged?

# Michel Foucault

Knowledge/power?

Legitimacy in relation to discourses of  
privatization and choice as a practice of policy?

CAREFULNESS

# Instrumental rationality

New public management?

Public choice theory?

The economical man – competition in the global market?

Bildung? Or only education?

Struggling for the Soul - The Politics of  
Schooling and the Construction of the Teacher

Tom Popkewitz **1998**

# Teach for America

Individual initiative and private enterprise

Liberal art students

500 recruits from the finest public and private universities



# The discourse of urban and rural children

## *“The double gesture of pedagogy”*

Today's educational reforms are practices that at the same time produce what is “inside” and “outside”, outside the norms of competence and achievement, that is, what is included and excluded.

“... the qualities of “being” urban and rural  
*(the urbanness and ruralness of the child)*  
constructed a place that lies outside reason and  
the standards of the normal.”

Popkewitz, 1998, p. 10

*Rescuing children - the rescued child is, in some way different from, even oppositional to, something that is “standard” and “essential” to another set of “normal” children.*

Popkewitz, 1998, s. 97

The categories are the effects of power

The “others” outside the space of the urban and rural, need no categories or distinctions to tell of their presence. But the norms of those who are absent in the discourses of urban/rural education silently pervade the systems of classification.

Who is the so called urban child?

The category of “immigrant”

*Abjection?*

Humiliation?

To speak for someone else?

*The knowledge system assumes knowledge as stable and unified, involved with universal systems of information that children have or do not have, and are ready or not ready to learn.*

Popkewitz, 1998, s. 92



This knowledge system of pedagogy *constructs the space* that is called urban and rural schooling

Particularly a space whose images function to *qualify or disqualify children from action and participation.*

We know very little what happens in the classrooms in everyday practices.

Grasping the child through categories  
undermines the idea of diversity and the idea of  
listening to children.


Deconstruct and reconceptualize our “Truths”  
about children, knowledge and learning

Journey beyond what we consider and classify  
as the normal - the norm

It is only when we call into question and  
discard what we consider the norm that we can  
hope for a pedagogical practice that speaks  
with another voice

A pedagogy that is open for the *un-known* and  
the *un-expected* - through creating *smooth  
spaces*

Worms

A photograph showing several children sitting around a light-colored wooden table, engaged in a craft activity. They are using brown clay to create various worm-like shapes. The worms are laid out on the table, some long and thin, some coiled into spirals, and some with more complex, web-like structures. The children are focused on their work, with some looking at the camera and others looking down at their creations. The background shows a typical classroom setting with a wooden floor and some toys.

Signal-iron-  
worm

Sun-  
vorm

Talk-  
vorm

# Spinoza

*Potentia* – we do not know what a body  
can do . . . we never know in advance  
how someone learns



Have we got *a competent child* in front of us?

# Stella Nova

“Children’s traces in Hallonbergen”

Rich children, rich parents and rich  
teachers













*You become what you  
encounter*



# An ethics of an encounter

*Identity is formed in relations and in exchange in between children, adults and the material environment.*











Abdallah: It starts to get colder

Ibrahim: It's so ice-cold... I wished I was a house instead:  
Houses do not freeze.

Abdallah: It is very cold, *Ibrahim*.

Ibrahim: It's warmer inside.

Abdallah: Yes, but it is freedom when one is outside the  
fence, don't you think so?

Ibrahim: Without adults?

Abdallah: Yes, then it is freedom!

Ibrahim: We are free now!



To be allowed to get outside the fence









A gift to the mall and the people in  
Hallonbergen

A ROBOT!











Pistol!

*The robot has to have a food-pistol, so it can shoot egg, milk and pan-cakes to poor countries that needs it. It needs many ears, so it can hear all the way to Gambia and Palestine. It has to have happy colours and it will say nice words. Inside the robot there will be a tape-recorder with robot-music. It will have wheels underneath its feet, so it can move.*

*Robot-*

*group 55*

Children are already "mikro-politically global" – they are already involved and participators in the global community

# A pedagogy of welcoming and hospitality

. . . that begins with *listening*

Emanuel Levinas and the Jacques Derrida

Deleuze's *rhizomatic image of nomadic thought*

*Yes, one has to listen the whole time on what everyone talks about, carefully one has to listen. It is only like that, that one can get a good FORCE OF HEARING*

*Filip 5 years old*







# Identity - subjectivity

Are we still caught up in an  
essentialistic discourse of ethnicity?

*Nikita:*

*1/4 German, 1/4 Swedish and 1/2 Japanese*

*A new meaning of subjectivity – a nomadic  
subjectivity that disrupts the concept of  
citizenship in a transnational world?*

A new image of subjectivity and identity?

*The metaphor of the tree* – root, trunk and stable - builds on recognition, linearity and progression, but also on origin and blood.

*The metaphor of the rhizome* – a multiplicity of functioning by means of connections and heterogeneity – not a given construction.

# A nomadic subjectivity



## A nomadic identity?

What helps the burden of homelessness easier is the hope of a new era of nomadity, of a globalization of people without roots, of de-territorialization of culture - that all of us, slowly but surely, are becoming modern nomads. More and more of us seems to start living in some form of exile, in forms of life which in existing ways of thinking are seen as deviant, threatening and unnatural. A way to break away from this way of thinking is to try to stop viewing the human being and her identity in botanical terms of a tree, with roots and trunk. Perhaps roots no longer exists, perhaps they have never existed.



# A nomadic identity

Instead of roots there perhaps exists what the French philosopher Deleuze has called a rhizome, which is different to the tree. A rhizome has no beginning or end, it is always in the beginning. . . . If the botanical image of cultural identity is associated with territory, continuity and unit, a rhizomatic identity is characterized by globalization, discontinuity and multiplicity. My grandfather was a nomad and his life was a continuous wandering of the way to fresh pastures. A couple of generations later, I am the the nomad. It is a story of history which I appreciate. For which I want to say thank you.