

Who defines pedagogy and professional identities?

A 'site of struggle' in Early Childhood Education

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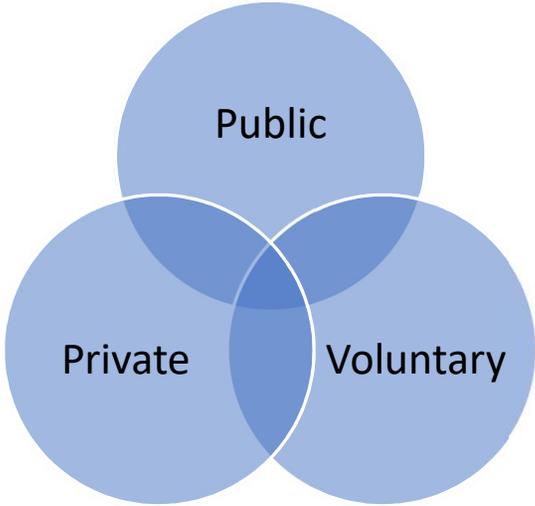
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A word on positionality...



Agency and Activism in Early Childhood Education

Some working definitions:

Pedagogy: 'In English 'pedagogy' normally means 'teaching method' and the adjective 'pedagogic' can be interchanged with 'didactic' . In the social pedagogy tradition of the Nordic and Central European countries 'pedagogy' is an approach to young children that addresses the whole person and the pedagogical relationships is one that includes integrally care, upbringing and education' (OECD 2006 p.230)

Professional Identities: being 'multi-faceted' (Alsup, 2006), I see these identities as 'socially and culturally' shaped (Swennen, Volman, & van Essen, 2008) and continually (re)constructed in multiple contexts.

Advocacy: 'speaking on behalf of others, often from within existing political, social and economic frames of reference' (Sumsion 2006),

Activism: as 'resisting and challenging those frames of references and the power bases that support them' (Sumsion 2006).



So why activism?

- Deeply ethical and political work
- Challenging Times
- History of Pioneers:

Fredrich Froebel

Margaret and Rachel
McMillan

Maria Montessori



It is . . . advisable that the teacher should understand, and even be able to criticize, the general principles upon which the whole educational system is formed and administered. He is not like a private soldier in an army, expected merely to obey, or like a cog in a wheel, expected merely to respond to and transmit external energy; he must be an intelligent medium of action.

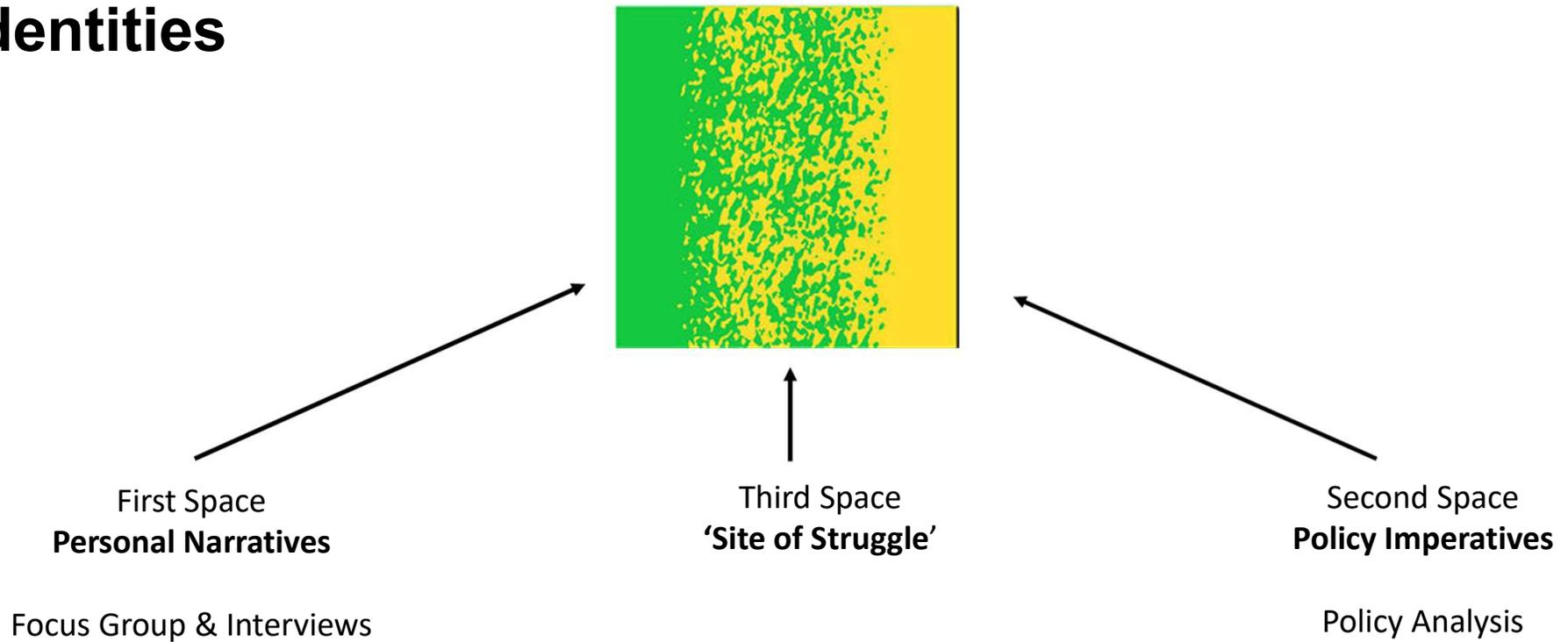
JOHN DEWEY, 1895

- How are early childhood educators positioned in ECE policies and how do they respond to this?
- What forms of individual and organisational policy activism exist?
- Which conditions/values enable or constrain activism and how do practitioners perceive their role in this?
- Do practitioners perpetuate or challenge prevailing thinking and how do they imagine alternatives in policy development?

Policy Tensions

- Early Years Funding – the ‘free’ entitlement
- School readiness
- Baseline – Mark 3
- Emphases in curriculum – reading as the ‘core purpose’ of YR
- And, and, and...

Pedagogy & Professional Identities



Listening to voices from the field - Countering policy narratives

‘Turning up the volume on...inaudible voices’
(Clough 2002: 67)

- An asynchronous online focus group
- 1:1 professional life history interviews

What happens in the third space?

Acquiescence?

Contradiction?

Cynical Compliance?

Negotiation?

Resistance?

Dissent?

Activism?

Early Reflections

'we are being asked [through inspection] to prove the unprovable'

'I feel voiceless, powerless and sometimes pointless.'

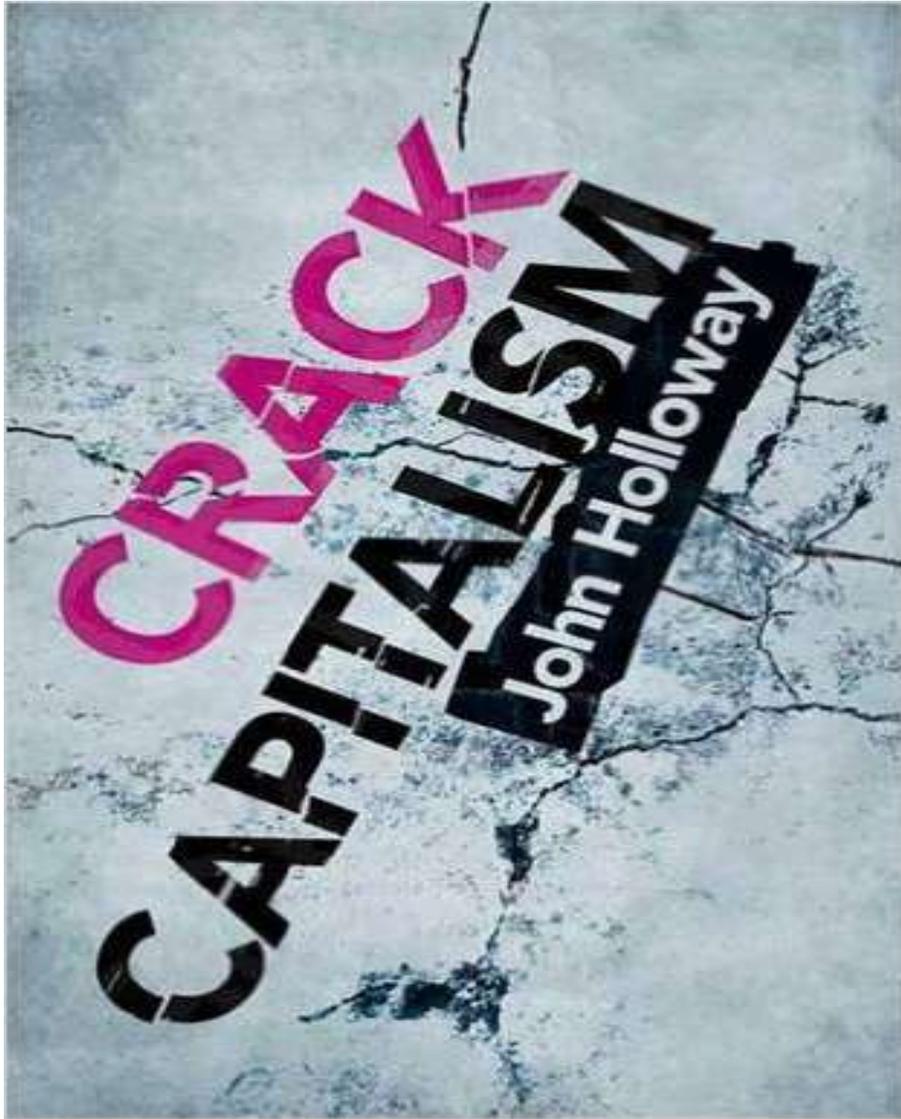
'I have started petitions. Signed petitions. Joined groups. Muscled way into the round table events. Demonstrated. Spoken to MPs. Rallied support. But I do believe the most effective is collective response.'

'A lone voice is a start but their is great strength and solidarity with like minded others.'

Thoughts about Structure or ‘the System’

Neoliberal thinking has been described as focussing on corporatisation, privatisation, efficiency, accountability and globalisation (Waugh, 2014, Baltodana, 2012;) and privileges the power of market over issues of citizenship and social justice.

Noddings (1992) argues there is an Ideology of control: control of content, control of performance criteria, control of behaviour and control of documentation all of which is centrally defined and centrally monitored.



The cracks begin with a ‘No’, from which there grows a dignity, a negation and a creation.

A crack is the perfectly ordinary creation of a space or moment in which we assert a different type of doing.

Holloway (2010)



Where there is power, there is resistance.

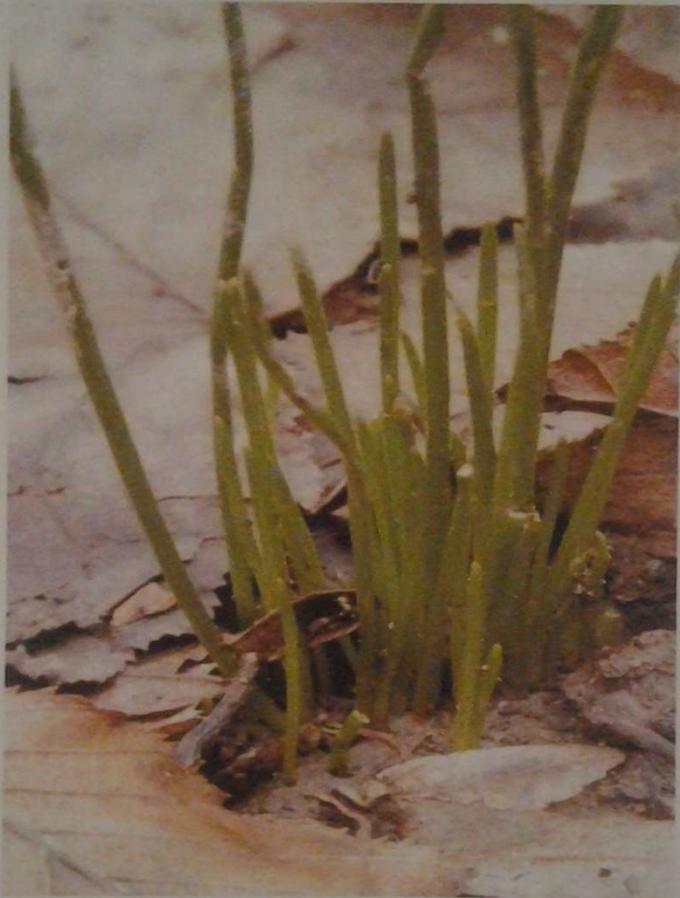
(Foucault, 1978, p.95)

...as soon as one can no longer think things as one formerly thought them, transformation becomes both very urgent, very difficult and quite possible.

(Foucault 1988: p.155)



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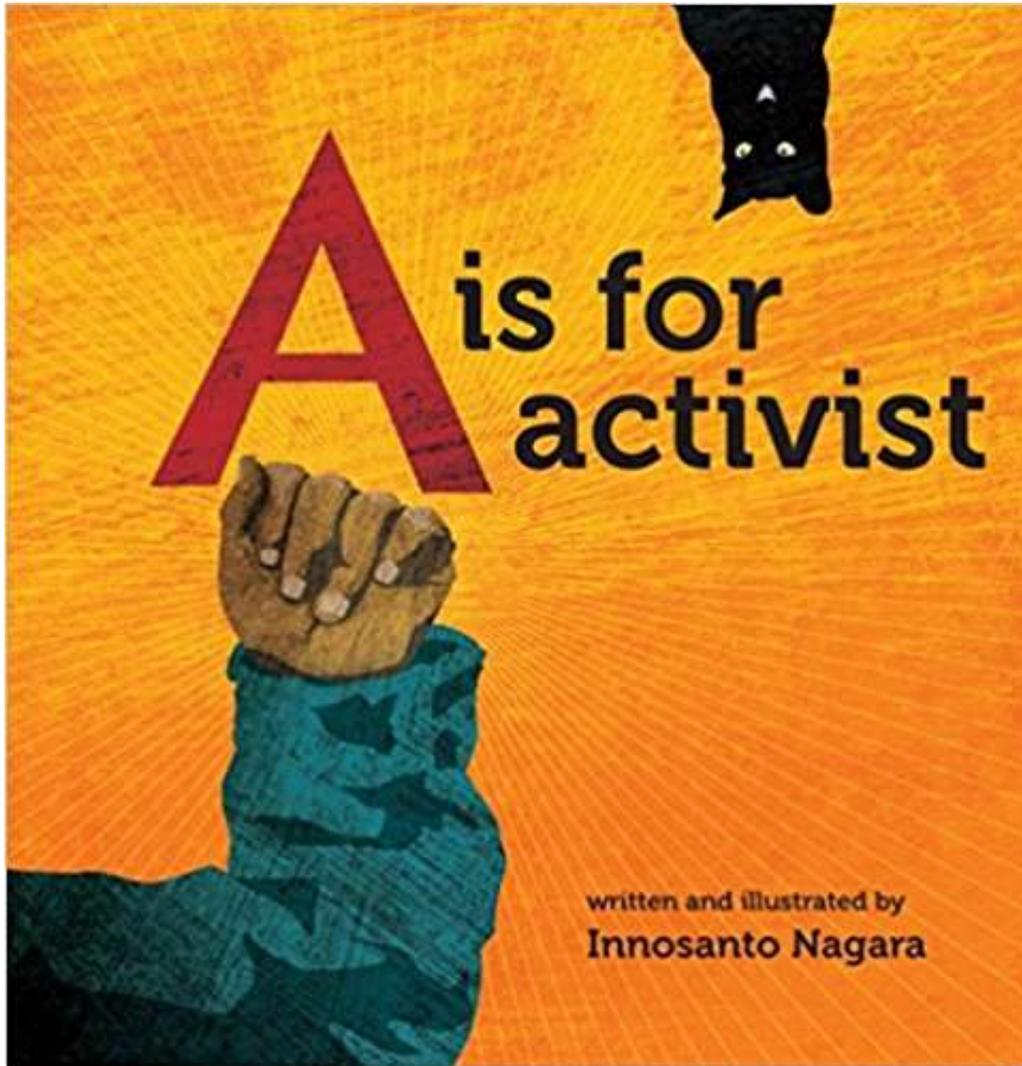
Courageous grasses

Erbe coraggiose Alex
Courageous grasses Alex



'Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it.'

Hannah Arendt, 1954



Thank you

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