Multiple-Paper Format

This dissertation uses a multiple-paper format and consists of an introductory chapter, a collection of three related articles, and a concluding chapter. A general purpose of the thesis is to bridge theoretical discourses, pedagogical guides, and ECE practices as they relate to the concepts of early childhood professional, young children’s participation and citizenship.

Introduction Chapter – This chapter lays the foundation for three interrelated papers by providing a framework for the study and introduces the overall concept of paradigm. The introductory chapter elucidates the typology of paradigms prevalent in the early childhood education and care field of study. It also describes the context and significance of the proposed research by unraveling the research questions and proposing the conceptual framework that guides the study and reveals the researcher’s theoretical disposition.

Article 1 – Paradigmatic Discourses: Reconceptualizing the Role of the Critical Paradigm & Revisiting the Image of the Child as a Social Agent. The focus of this article is to undertake a brief review of the myriad of educational paradigms that inform the field of early childhood pedagogy as well as to define how these paradigms represent the child in the process of pedagogical decision-making. The researcher engages with these paradigms as critical sites that are in sync with one another and situated in rational continuity as opposed to disconnected possibilities. The paper categorizes educational paradigms into the four broad clusters of modern, constructivist, postmodern, and critical-participatory. It alludes to existing tensions among the paradigms in their utilization of different pedagogical terminologies that adhere to the image of the child. In particular, the paper explores how specific pedagogical terminologies inherent in various educational paradigms imply an altogether different meaning once explaining about the role of the child in pedagogical process. The article argues that although the image of the child is well defined by paradigms, it demonstrates a tendency to change its scope when put in the context of practical applications of early childhood curriculum and pedagogy. Therefore, the current paper concludes that the multidimensional and inter-relational use of pedagogical terms creates a possibility for relational theoretical and practical continuity as well as supports an ambiguity of interpretations about the role of the child as an active agent. The paper argues that this issue can effectively be addressed if educators and scholars engage in the critical theory discourses. Critical discourses are viewed as significant incentives that ignite early childhood participatory pedagogy and help to establish the child as a social agent concept. In conclusion, this paper addresses the important issue of the image of the child as a social actor while reinforcing concerns for justice and academic action as they relate to the young child’s right to contribute to matters that relate to his/her education.

Article 2 – Extending the Notions of Young Children’s Citizenship and Participation: What do Early Learning Frameworks have to Offer? This article provides a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of Canadian Provincial Early Learning Framework (ELF) documents. ELFs are defined as documents that guide early childhood educators’ pedagogy and endorse best practices. Through a critical discourse analysis, ELF documents’ dispositions toward the concepts of young children’s citizenship and active participation are explored. Considering the strong connection between both concepts, they are viewed as central ideas in the critical-participatory paradigmatic discourse. In this context, the critical-participatory paradigm creates a theoretical framework for

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1 The critical–participatory paradigm adheres to the humanitarian and egalitarian values of society in which education is understood as a process of empowering students/children and subsequently views them as active participants who are capable of contributing to society. It is based on the concepts of transformative, democratic, and culturally responsive pedagogy where heteroglossia plays a central role. As Bakhtin (1981) proposed,
analysis and motivates the researcher to critically examine the ELF texts to uncover the texts’ theoretical disposition. In line with the researcher’s commitment to critical pedagogy, utilizing the charter of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) becomes central. The article also includes a discussion of historical constructs regarding the concepts of participation and young children’s citizenship. After outlining the theoretical foundation for the literature overview, the axiomatic structure and paradigmatic inclinations of the ELF documents are identified. This is followed by an in-depth analysis of pedagogical vocabularies utilized in ELF documents in an effort to understand how the texts encourage early childhood educators (ECEs) to employ concepts of young children’s citizenship and participation in their pedagogical practices.

**Article 3 – Consulting with Young Children: A Myth or Reality?** This article provides an analysis of empirical data addressing the concept of consultation with young children. The purpose of this research study is also to explore how early childhood professionals (ECP) understand in theory and employ in practice the process of consultation with young children. The study is guided by an emancipatory philosophy following the view that young children have the right to contribute to curriculum and engage in policy-related decision-making processes. It utilizes grounded theory design and employs qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. As part of the study, thirty-four early childhood professionals completed an online open-ended survey with five of the participants partaking in the follow-up semi-structured interviews. The findings discussed in the article reveal that early childhood professionals demonstrate an emergent knowledge about the concept of consultation with young children. These ECE professionals engaged in consultation with young children primarily for curriculum planning and maintaining cooperative relationships. In their day-to-day work with children, educators utilize strategies such as observation and documentation. The findings of the present study support the need for early childhood educators to further develop their professional pedagogies by expanding their knowledge of different educational paradigms and focusing on the implementation of the concept of the child as an active citizen.

**Conclusion**– The final chapter synthesizes philosophical, theoretical, and empirical evidence derived from the content of the three articles. It addresses limitations and outlines recommendations for the field of early childhood education. Ultimately, this chapter discusses the potential benefits of the research study for policy-makers, academic scholars, educators/practitioners, and individuals interested in advancing their knowledge about the complexities of early childhood pedagogy and children’s rights.

The concept of heteroglossia is a “base condition for governing the operation of meaning” (p. 428). Heteroglossia is in opposition to unitary, universal language adaptations. It suggests that meaning conveyed through the symbolic linguistic ordinaries such as word, utterances, and text is dependent on “social, historical, meteorological, psychological” conditions (p. 428). Therefore, as Bakhtin (1981) concludes, each individual creates his/her own meaning of the universal text. This unique meaning, when communicated, reveals multiple understandings of a particular phenomenon, text, situation, etc. When multiple meanings are projected in a discourse, they enrich not only a discourse on a given phenomenon by acknowledging various interpretations, but also individuals who participates in this discourse by encouraging them to revisit their worldview and life values.