

The child-centred approach of CHILD-UP project

Claudio Baraldi, claudio.baraldi@unimore.it

University of Modena and Reggio Emilia

Keywords: agency, hybridisation, classroom interaction, facilitation, dialogue

Abstract

CHILD-UP (*Children Hybrid Integration: Learning Dialogue as a way of Upgrading Policies of Participation*) is a Horizon 2020 project which started in January 2019. It aims to investigate (1) the ways of enhancing migrant children's ability to participate in changing their social and cultural conditions of integration and (2) the ways this ability is accounted for and engaged with in educational interventions and policies, social protection services, families and communities. CHILD-UP collects and merges literature review, existing data and quantitative and qualitative data in local situations to provide research-based materials, guidelines for intervention and self-evaluation, training package for professionals, and to influence local, national and European policy making.

This presentation introduces the child-centred approach underlying CHILD-UP. CHILD-UP recognises that human life is conditioned by the interaction of a variety of social and cultural factors, which is shaped by various and interconnected social systems (e.g., education, law, politics, economy, the media). However, CHILD-UP also recognizes that children's actions are not determined by these social and cultural constraints. Children are social agents, and their agency is primarily important for policies and social interventions.

Agency is a specific form of participation based on choices of action and thus contributing to social change. The enhancement of children's agency requires specific social conditions. In particular, adult-child interactions can support children's agency in negotiating social change. CHILD-UP suggests that supporting migrant children's agency is extremely important for their integration. The concept of integration is analysed from a child-centered perspective: social processes of integration can be changed through migrant children's agency. Children with a migrant background can exercise agency in constructing their identities and changing their social contexts. Agency can lead to negotiation of identity and to the production of hybrid identities, e.g. loose, unstable manifestations of cultural identities. The concept of hybrid integration is thus adopted in CHILD-UP. Negotiation also concerns a gendered form of agency. Gender is a social construction, enhancing expectations, values, identities, roles and relationships. Expectations of gender-related responsibilities and tasks create different possibilities of children's participation in different spheres of life. Children's agency allows negotiation of gendered order, though under the influence of a gendered structure.

The education system is considered very important for the integration of migrant children, as it conveys knowledge, norms, values, basic and tacit assumptions. Traditional education requires children's adaptation, which reduces their agency. CHILD-UP is interested in dialogic practices aiming to enhance migrant children's authority in accessing and producing knowledge. Therefore, CHILD-UP analyses dialogic interventions in schools that enhance migrant children's agency, empowering their expressions, treating their different perspectives equally, opening the floor to diversity of personal trajectories and production of hybrid identities. These

dialogic interventions may include second language learning, intercultural education, language and intercultural mediation, facilitation of classroom interactions providing support for children's agency.

CHILD-UP aims to investigate ways of promoting migrant children's agency and hybrid identities in order to: (1) suggest how to improve positive experiences, (2) provide tools for professionals' training, (3) produce methodological guidelines and tools for self-evaluation, (4) provide policy recommendations.

References

- Baraldi, Claudio. 2012. "Participation, facilitation and mediation in educational interactions." In *Participation, Facilitation, and Mediation. Children and Young People in their Social Context*, edited by Claudio Baraldi and Vittorio Iervese, 66-86. London: Routledge.
- Baraldi, Claudio. 2014. "Children's participation in communication systems: A theoretical perspective to shape research." In *Soul of Society: A Focus on the Life of Children and Youth*, edited by Nicole Warehime, 63-92. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing.
- Baraldi, Claudio and Vittorio Iervese. 2015. "Observing children's capabilities as agency." In *Children's rights and the capability approach. Challenges and prospects*, edited by Daniel Stöcklin and Jean-Michel Bonvin, 43-65. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Baraldi, Claudio and Vittorio Iervese. 2017. "Narratives of memories and dialogues in multicultural classrooms." *Narrative Inquiry* 27(2): 398-417.
- Dervin, Fred and Anthony J. Liddicoat, eds. 2013. *Linguistics for intercultural education*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Graham, Anne and Robyn Fitzgerald. 2010. "Progressing children's participation: Exploring the potential of a dialogical turn." *Childhood* 17 (3): 342-359.
- Holliday, Adrian. 2011. *Intercultural communication and ideology*. Thousand Oaks/London: Sage.
- James, Allison (2009). "Agency." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies*, edited by Jens Qvortrup, William Corsaro and Michael-Sebastian Honig, 34-45. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Wyness, Michael. 2013. "Children's participation and intergenerational dialogue: Bringing adults back into the analysis." *Childhood* 20 (4): 429-442.