

Editorial: The Child in School and Education

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For this special issue of *Confero*, we invited contributions that explore the positionality of children and youth within educational contexts and educational research. In *The Child in School and Education* we present three thought-provoking essays that grapple with education through the lenses of pupilness, participatory perspectives, and the potential of student positions. With these perspectives, the essays bring intricacies of educational settings and their transformative role in shaping identities to the fore. The issue concerns questions of how educational conditions are structured and performed as part of an institutionalized education, particularly in terms of agency, socialization, and subjecthood. A central topic in all three contributions is the divisionary tendency between the student/child as subject/object within education and educational research. The contributions problematize, although in different ways, how challenges emerge, depending on what kind of understandings of what constitutes a subject and an object respectively.

From this outset, educational decisions, traditions and practices inevitably become philosophical and political matters. By inviting scholars with various backgrounds to engage with these complex processes, this issue aims to contribute to an interdisciplinary discussion that problematizes how links between educational practice, educational research and conceptions of children-youth can be approached and understood.

In the first essay, Lina Lago explores pupilness as a position/positioning/action within Swedish school-age educare. With a critical gaze, Lago discusses settings, normative structures, and value systems in relation to the child as active, taking on the role of pupil and the practice of *doing* pupilness. For the writer, the term “pupilness” has a discursive power to it. By foregrounding the act of “verbally positioning” the child as a pupil, Lago ventures into the domain of language-making practices to research and discuss what kind of effects this ‘branding’ can have, both within educational work and affiliated research. By considering distinctions between “pupil” and “pupilness”, Lago argues for the acknowledgement of children as actors in the sense that they both produce and are produced by the educational context they are a part of. For the writer, doing and resisting pupilness involves making consensus, joint decision-making, as well as moments of resistance. An interesting tension brought forward in the essay is what happens when a child negotiates pupilness in ways that do not correspond to institutional expectations of what a ‘proper’ pupil *is*. Lago exemplifies both discursive patterns as well as potential discursive shifts. The act of performing pupilness is here empirically located through its contradictories, challenges as well as inherent possibilities.

In the second essay, Roger Säljö considers participant perspectives as historically located objects of research. Säljö initially argues that conventions in education that are based on structural, often oppositional perspectives, are at risk of overlooking important aspects of education – specifically by failing to tend to the daily practices and processes that produce the actual educational situations as well as the learning outcomes. By turning to the concept of participation, Säljö challenges the idea of education and educational processes as obscured ‘black boxes’. The author explicates this through a historical gaze by focusing on the inclusion of participant agency and how it has been construed throughout different shifts. One important contribution offered in this essay is that participant perspectives are something that, from a fundamental standpoint, overlap several stakeholder-perspectives at once. By investigating often polarized and irreconcilable positions, Säljö addresses the historicity of Western

modern education through how it has shifted discursively via different philosophical and political onsets. Emphases is placed on what participatory perspectives and participation can add to contemporary perspectives on education. By contrasting academic positions, Säljö contributes with a critical and nuanced essay on tensions, differences, and possibilities concerning participation as a central touchstone for education and educational research.

The third essay, by Eleni Patoulioti and Claes Nilholm, takes a discursive approach towards how educational research – that understands the classroom as a form of community – affords subject positions to students involved. By drawing from a previous study of theirs, that offers four discursive formations (the idealized home, the idealized polis, the idealized academia, and the power-resisting space) as an analytical framework, the authors delve further into how subject positions are made available or unavailable for students. Patoulioti and Nilholm address the consequences these negotiations can have as an attempt to understand students' potential for both maintaining and challenging these positions. An important contribution made by the authors is that previous attempts at defining educational community fall short in providing subject positions with fundamental influence. In that sense, the discursive reading of *community* made by the authors directs attention not only to how the notion of community is understood, but also to how the actual inclusionary space for shared community is risking student subjecthood and positionality as well as agency. Patoulioti and Nilholm contribute with knowledge concerning how the positions afforded students' needs to be considered from the ground up for educational communities to thrive.

Collectively, these essays offer critical insights into how educators, policymakers, and researchers can reconsider educational communities and the spaces therein for voices of children, youth, pupils and students. They challenge us to consciously approach the classroom as a dynamic space where students are active contributors, and educational practices are transparent and inclusive.