Early Education and ‘the Child’ as Sites of Politics: A comparative study of Hungary and Australia

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Abstract
A broad body of research considers children and childhood as a ‘substance’ (Foucault, 1994) that different discourses objectify in varying ways, for example, that children are innocent or children are going through phases. We accept these discourses as telling about children’s true nature. I approach the child here rather as a ‘form’ that can vary according to what knowledge was created about this ‘form’ and which knowledge was accepted as true. Following up on an earlier study that examined the shifting conceptualizations of ‘the child’ in Western Australia, I embarked on new research that investigates the ways in which ‘the child’ was thought about in Hungary under state socialism. I chose Hungary because these sites represent two political regimes: socialist/communist and liberal/capitalist, and as such offer different institutional structures for early childhood education.

Through the utilization of the constitutions of ‘the child’ I outline from the Hungarian study, I aim to de-stabilize some of the taken-for-granted constitutions of ‘the child’ that are embedded in the recent field of early childhood education in Australia. Another aim of this paper is to report on the initial findings of the Hungarian study. Due to the complexity of the work at hand, I narrowed the focus in this paper to a particular education program document, the Educational program for kindergartens from 1971. The analysis first explores a brief history and the shifting nature of state engagement with early education in Hungary to create a historical and political context for the analysis. Then I move into discussing some of the intellectual traditions by centering on the nature of education this document outlines. This way of proceeding with the analysis enables the creation of a space in which constitutions of ‘the child’ could be identified. By conceptualizing the state as the constructor of educational paths and the interpreter of ‘the child’, I aim to answer the following questions: What conceptualizations of early education this document outlines in Hungary during the socialist period? How these conceptualizations of education constituted ‘the child’ as their subject? The overall question of this paper is: In what ways are constitutions of ‘the child’ in socialist/communist Hungary and in liberal/capitalist Australia today different or similar? This study involves historical refocusing and a conceptual retooling. It also uses an alternative method of history writing, that is, genealogy in a Foucauldian sense.
Introduction
This paper is a part of a broader study that examines the translations of two political ideologies: socialist/communist and liberal/capitalist into the broad field of early care and education after WWII. This work studies what ideas political ideologies embedded in party politics produced about ‘early education’ and ‘the child’. In this paper, I consider a section of this broad project and explore the ways in which ideas of socialist kindergarten education were formed in Hungary and how they produced a collection of understandings of ‘the child’. This ‘tableau’ of ‘the child’ then serves as a background to illuminate some aspects of conceptualizations of ‘the child’ in current early years discourses in Australia that consider children primarily as ‘learners’ and members of communities (Millei, 2007).

The idea for this project emerged from Lampland’s (1997) book titled *The Object of Labor*. Lampland (1997) examines how economic and political practices alter the patterns of work, the ways communities constitute themselves and how these practices transform social actions and cultural beliefs after the collectivization of agriculture in Hungary. She describes a process through which labor became fully commodified in socialist Hungary “inimical to capitalist development generally” (p.1). Moreover, as Lampland (1997) argues, socialist ethics and collective property relations produced “atomized, individualist, utilitarian attitudes toward work, property, money and morality” characterizing capitalist economies and surprisingly present under a socialist regime (p.5). Therefore, I would argue that it is possible that under different ideological regimes, such as state socialism and liberalism (capitalist economies), ‘the child’ and her or his education are conceptualized in ways that are different but also strikingly similar to each other.

During ‘state socialism’ the state constructed new structures, pedagogies and curriculum as well as aims for kindergarten children’s education (Hermann, 1965; Vág, 1979). Moreover, the construction of education and the definition of its subjects stood in a complex relation to one another and were highly political in nature. As the state embarked on a given educational path, it gave rise to particular interpretations or constitutions of ‘the child’. By conceptualizing the state as the constructor of educational paths and the interpreter of ‘the child’, I examine the ways in which the state constructed kindergarten education and produced particular constitutions of ‘the child’ and the institutional practices for her or his education in the particular period of ‘state socialism’.

This study contributes to the handful of previous works that understood the child/childhood as a relational concept, constituted in relation to understandings of the adult/citizen/adulthood for example, (Ailwood, 2002; Buckingham, 2000; Burman, 1994; Hultqvist, 1997, 2001; James & James, 2004; Mayall, 2002; Millei, 2007). In order to outline the particular ways in which political ideologies fashioned ‘the child’ and her or his education, this project involves a historical refocusing and a conceptual retooling. It uses an alternative method of history writing, that is, genealogy in a Foucauldian sense (Foucault, 1980). There exists a body of work describing images of the child in early education in Hungary during the time period under examination (Kéri, 2002; Nóbk, 2000; Pukánszky, 2001, 2000; Szabolcs, 1995; Vajda & Pukánszky, 1998). These studies, however, consider the child in history as a universal subject whose education was changed according
to emerging pedagogical and curricular trends and describe how images of the child have changed in continuity.

This study ‘de-centers’ from its subject (‘the child’) first and examines the documentary data to describe the historico-political discursive field that produced the particular ‘child’ subjects of kindergarten in Hungary. This way, as Foucault (1980) argues, the genealogy of the subject “get[s] rid of the subject itself ... to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework” without the necessity to examine an “empty subject” of ‘the child’ as “it runs throughout the course of history” (p. 117). Using genealogy in comparative research is a new methodology that has the potential to help us understand “phenomena in historical terms but not in terms of a metanarrative of linearity, continuity, or rational progress” (Carney & Bista, 2009, p. 194). It focuses on the knowledges and technologies assembled for the education of the young child, in which particular subjects are constituted (Foucault, 1988). The analysis in this paper focuses on a particular document1 that had a central importance in kindergarten education in state socialist Hungary. Through the examination of the data, ‘the child’ emerges as a historically contingent idea that is fashioned by available discourses at a given time. This methodology is similar in concept to a ‘vertical case study’ described by Vavrus and Bartlett (2006) that situates a local phenomena and “interpretation within a broader cultural, historical, and political investigation” (p. 95). During the analysis I look for significant discursive themes that fashioned ‘the child’ in particular ways by outlining the idea, the purpose, and some methods of education in their broader intellectual, ideological, historical and political contexts.

The backdrop of this study is my work on constitutions of ‘the child’ in Australia (Millei, 2007, 2008, 2009). To compare these I chose one of the former socialist countries: Hungary. Hungary stands out with its progressive and universal kindergarten program based on a strong tradition sustained over a long period of time (OECD, 2004). Another important aspect of the Hungarian kindergarten is that after the fall of the Berlin wall (1989) Hungary was one of the few countries that were able to retain early education in its existing format (Bloch & Blessing, 2000). Despite being the early target of social and economic policy reforms during the post-communist transition, the kindergarten for three to six years olds was kept in operation due to conceptualizing it as an educational institution strongly associated with public schooling. As Bloch and Bessing (2000) argues: “Hungarian officials merged kindergarten into general and accepted discourse on ‘schooling’ rather than the more flexible, disposable, and separate/separable early education, preschool, or kindergarten schooling” (p. 74).

In order to inform the analysis, first I contextualize and outline the political rationales of kindergarten education in Hungary in a short historical review. Next, to keep the analysis brief here, I center the examination on a particular document: Educational program for kindergartens (Pálné Bakonyi & Szabadi, 1971) that was a national core program for kindergartens. In the conclusion, I present some

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1 The documentary data collected for the broader comparative study contains curriculum, pedagogical, policy and academic texts produced in the given time period and are used as primary data.
similarities and differences in regards to ideas of ‘the child’ under the socialist regime of Hungary and current understandings of ‘the child’ in Australia. During the discussion I also highlight the further trajectories of the greater project by shedding some light on the other areas that require exploration in order to gain a genealogical understanding of shifting conceptualizations of ‘the child’ in socialist Hungary and Australia.

Political shifts and laying the foundations for socialist kindergarten
Hungary after centuries of being a feudal-capitalist state and part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy became a socialist country after WWII. The political regime saw early education as an integral part of the socialist agenda by contributing to the socialist transformation of the State (Pál Bakonyi, Földesi, & Hermann, 1963; Hermann & Komlósi, 1972; Kövér, 1987, 2004; Mészáros, Németh, & Pukánszky, 2004; Vág, 1979). The early period of ‘state socialism’ was marked by agrarian reform, nationalization, the secularization of schools and the introduction of a planned economy. The demographic characteristics of the country rapidly and extensively changed, heavy industrialization took place in which two-thirds of working-age women were employed in production by 1971 (Hermann & Komlósi, 1972). The agenda of early education, however, was only partly to satisfy working mothers’ needs. Kindergarten education had a dominant political raison d’etre to create the foundations for the ‘standard program of personality’ (Vág, 1979) to dress up the person with all those characteristics that they need to become the socialist citizen (Robinson & Robinson, 1971). Kindergarten education was seen by the State as a first step in transforming society.

The Hungarian kindergarten system has a long, rich and pioneering history that shows a great and rapid expansion and a strong intellectual tradition (OECD, 2004). From 1938 until 1975 there was more than a three-fold increase in the number of kindergartens (Kardos & Kornidesz, 1990). By 1985, 91.3% of 3-6 years old children were taught in 4823 kindergartens where 96.2% of teachers had the required two years tertiary training at diploma level (Kardos & Kornidesz, 1990). The child-teacher ration was 12.7 at this time (Kardos & Kornidesz, 1990). One of the important political periods that provided some foundations for the development of the socialist kindergarten system was the 133 days of Proletarian Rule in 1919. According to Vág (1979) this period brought a particular set of conceptualizations of early education in which the kindergarten not only preserved its educational nature but also played an integral role in public schooling for the first time. The proposal for the compulsory enrolment of 3-6 years old children in ‘playschools’ (kindergartens), the representation of ‘playschools’ as the first step of schooling, the governmental ownership of ‘playschools’ (they were nationalized) and the introduction of a uniform socialist pedagogy all reflected the heightened importance and changed role of ‘playschool’ (Vág, 1979). In the short life of the Proletarian Rule, however, the full transformation of the kindergarten system could not take place.

2 It is important to note here the Proletarian Rule in 1919 under the leadership of Béla Kun here that made powerful attempts to transform the Hungarian feudal society before WWII.
During subsequent political shifts to the far right\(^3\), kindergartens were reconceptualized as institutions primarily providing care, which was signaled by their move under the responsibility of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1936 and later to the Ministry of Welfare (Hermann, 1972). The centers were overcrowded and education was replaced by ‘habituation’ that happened in a militarist and nationalist spirit (Kövér, 2004). After ‘Liberation’\(^4\) and as part of the process of socialist nation building, kindergartens and schools were nationalized (collectivized) in 1948 and were taken over by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs responsible also for schooling. Kindergarten programs were centralized under the Ministry of Education. This shift meant the re-thinking of kindergartens as educational institutions that “must lay the foundation of education” and “prepare the children for school” (cited in Hermann & Komlósi, 1972, p. 6).

\(a\), Kindergarten as socialist education

By the early 1950s the kindergarten system was already well under reform in its governance and institutional aspects. The changes were laid out in the new 1953 Kindergarten Law No. III (Magyar Népköztársaság, 1953). The Law aimed: to protect working mothers’ rights to work; to further solidify the interests of the family; and to ensure children’s development and education. The Law secularized the kindergarten, and it regulated: its funding; the operation and the establishment of new centres; centralized its programming; laid down the requirement of employing only trained teachers\(^5\); and legislated the establishment of ethnic kindergartens\(^6\) in particular areas of need (Magyar Népköztársaság, 1953). First of all, as the Law outlined:

The function of kindergarten education is the education and care of children of kindergarten age in accordance with the goals of socialist education, and their preparation for primary education. Kindergarten education must establish the basis for the healthy, hardy, patriotic, self-confident, courageous, disciplined and multilaterally educated man (Braham, 1970, p. 44).

The Law was followed by the introduction of a guide for kindergarten teachers, *Nevelőmunka az óvodában: Útmutatás óvónök számára* (*Education in kindergarten: A guide for kindergarten teachers*, Balogh, Hermann, Szabó, & Szabó, 1957, *Guide hereafter*), that filled the need for a coordinated national plan. This *Guide* clarified the role of education and teaching in kindergarten work (Kövér, 2004). The aims of education were broken down into detailed smaller aims that outlined what the child should be able to do by a specific age. The *Guide* was evaluated by many as an overly prescriptive and rigidly goal-centered program that aimed too

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\(^3\) The Cultural Minister under Miklós Horthy, Bálint Hóman, promoted national unity instead of the coexistence of multiple ‘national’ ideologies and he initiated the organizational restructuring of schooling and also he withdrew funds from kindergartens. The ideal of a uniform national ideology above everything, which even preceded religious ethics, governed education and professional training at this time (Mészáros et al., 2004).

\(^4\) The liberation of Hungary from under Fascist rule by the Soviet Army and its alliances.

\(^5\) Training of preschool teachers included three years of specialized high school training at that time, which was changed in 1959 to an academic level with the establishment of three Training Institutes for Preschool Teachers where two years tertiary level training took place (Hermann & Komlósi, 1972).

\(^6\) These kindergartens were established in areas where the dominant part of the population belonged to an ethnicity other than Hungarian, for example Slovak, Slovenes, Serbian, German-Slovenes, Roma.
high without the consideration of children’s manifold and growing capabilities and readiness for learning (Pál Bakonyi, Földesi, & Hermann, 1963; Hermann, 1965; Hermann & Komlósi, 1972). In a similar vein the Guide also ascribed methods that disregarded children’s actual capabilities. Not surprisingly, it could be argued that this plan mirrored the logic of socialist command economic planning and the dictatorial and highly centralized regime of the first phase of ‘state socialism’.

These critiques culminated in a movement towards the inclusion of more and more spontaneous activities into the Az óvodai nevelés programja (Educational program for kindergartens, Pálné Bakonyi & Szabadi, 1971) (referred to as Program hereafter). The child’s interests and independence of thinking were also taken into consideration in the Program that “connected with the worldwide ‘pedagogic revolution’” (p. 11) which posed the importance of the capacity to acquire and elaborate on knowledge, creativity and much more activity on behalf of the pupils (Hermann & Komlósi, 1972). To answer these critiques and global changes, the Program shifted the emphasis from academic teaching to the development of personality (Hermann & Komlósi, 1972) that was argued to be closely aligned with socialist pedagogy and the formation of the ‘socialist human’ ideal. In 1972 the Hungarian Communist Party declared that the kindergartens’ role was to prepare children for schooling as an uppermost political task (Kövér, 2004). This acknowledgement of the importance of kindergarten further reinforced its role as a first step in public education.

Parallel with these shifts and connected to the development of the Program, from the 1960s, increasing efforts were invested in exploring the psychological laws of learning and knowledge acquisition with the explicit aim to support the purposeful ideological formation of young ‘socialist humans’ through educational work (Kövér, 2004). For this reason children’s worldview stood at the centre of psychological inquiry (such as Elkonyin, 1964; Lénárd, 1959; Mérei, 1948) in order to understand the processes of and possibilities for children’s ideological thinking, the development of their worldview and the educational processes that might facilitate developing these areas (Hermann, 1963, 1966). Another important stream of studies was concerned with the relations of society and consciousness (in a Marxist understanding) and the foundations of community behaviour (Mérei, 1948). This body of research was incorporated into the Program and helped to create a balance between community concerns and children’s individual differences, considered as a crucial problem for the socialist transformation of society (Hermann, 1965). It also supplied solutions for the optimal use of individual talents and capabilities for the purposes of community interests (Herman and Komlósi, 1972). The development of this document took five years and a great collaborative effort; it remained in force for more than two decades but it was updated several times. This is a key text that marks an important era of kindergarten education in Hungary which overarches ‘reform socialism’ and therefore it is examined here in some detail.

The idea of socialist education and ‘the man-child’ (embergyerek)

7 The child in the socialist literature was called the ‘man-child’. This meaning does not necessarily portray the child as a male but rather the term is used to consider children as human as in earlier English literature the ‘human’ was called ‘man’.
Keeping the first edition of the *Program* (1971) as the centre of analysis, I briefly outline some themes in regards to the concept of ‘education’ and the understandings of ‘the child’ that arise from these discourses. This analysis necessarily includes references to other periods and other documentary data.

The *Program* starts with a chapter that discussed the aims and tasks of kindergarten education. While the 1957 Guide focused on the institution of kindergarten and its role and responsibilities, the *Program*’s main focus was the ‘kind’ of education delivered as an integral part of socialist education. According to the *Program* the kindergarten continues the work of the family and extends that. The family and the kindergarten are both responsible for the education of 3-6 years old children “to ‘feel good’, develop routine activities, and to form children’s personalities correspondingly with society’s expectations” (p. 9). This line calls for a longer elaboration and the contextualization of the terminology used.

The aim of socialist education, according Bakonyi, Földesi and Hermann (1963), is derived from the identification of the needs of the developing socialist society in regard to the characteristics of ‘man’. Drawing on Makarenko, the prominent Soviet pedagogue, they explain: “Where could the aims of education come from? Naturally, it cannot originate from elsewhere than from our society’s needs” (quoted in Pál Bakonyi et al., 1963, p. 12). In this way, as Pál Bakonyi et al. (1963) continue, the aim of individual development of man is in a dialectical relationship with society’s development. This relationship, they argue by drawing on Marxian explanations, minimizes conflict between the person and society and therefore provides the foundations for proper relationships and individual happiness.

As the *Program* states, the aim of kindergarten education is “to facilitate the harmonious development of children’s versatile (multilateral) capabilities” (p. 9). It is argued by Engels (in Pál Bakonyi, et. al., 1963) that a man needs to be versatile to help overcome the capitalist division of labour and consequently to facilitate the building of classless society. By having versatile capabilities every man is ready to use his abilities and skills in all possible ways to fulfil society’s shifting needs and his own individual inclinations (Pál Bakonyi et al., 1963). It is important to note here that the idea of ‘versatility’ is different to flexibility, because new abilities and skills are not developed as a reaction to demands, as in flexibility, but rather are developed and ready to be used as the desire or need arises. So having these abilities and skills at the individual’s disposal opens up possibilities rather than arises as a reaction to be able to live with given opportunities. It is not only the matter of timing.

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8 While the guide emphasized kindergarten as a particular institution with its structure, employees, organization and so on, the *Program* focuses mainly on the nature of education delivered in kindergartens.

9 My translation.

10 My translation.

11 In the *Economic and Political Manuscripts of 1844* Marx argues that alienation from certain parts of our lives - other people, things and activities - is the cause of human unhappiness and dissatisfaction. Therefore, furthering this idea of Marx to education, Bakonyi et al. (1963) argues that education’s aim is to bring up humans in relationship with society.

12 My translation.
The Program also identifies the age at which the child finishes kindergarten as still a “beginning and unfixed stage of the process of becoming a socialist man”\(^{13}\) (p. 9). Therefore, kindergarten is an integral part of socialist education and it lays down particular foundations discussed below for the development of the socialist man. The Program lists the particular goals of the kindergarten phase of education under 3 areas:

1. physical and health care and development;
2. community feeling, behaviour and pursuits;
3. experiencing and learning about and connecting to the realities of life\(^{14}\).

a. The ‘community child’

One of the themes that underpin these aims is the interrelationship and mutual determination of the individual child and children’s community. Under the second area (2), for example, it is stated: “to be in a community should become children’s natural form of life, and they should seek it out as an internal need” (p. 10)\(^{15}\). This is elaborated in more details in the Program: this should become a characteristic of the child’s personality and therefore he or she should feel better in this community of children that hold children together with specific duties and responsibilities and where they really belong\(^{16}\). The kindergarten teacher’s role, as it is assigned in the Program, is to develop children’s community through particular methods. This process then, as claimed by Madarász (1963), essentially becomes one with socialist education itself: the well-rounded formation of personality and teaching through the community.

The development and strengthening of children’s community also directly manifest in the development of the individual and formation of her or his personality (Madarász, 1963). To explain this idea further by drawing on Makarenko’s (1949) work, it is argued in the Program that the teacher is unable to form children’s personality without the help of children’s community; they run parallel. Children are also teaching each other, not only the teachers teach them, and these avenues of teaching are equally important\(^{17}\). Moreover, teaching through the community also involved the idea that the teacher is not solely responsible to develop the community, but individual children are also effective in forming the community with their opinions and activities (Hermann & Komlósi, 1972).

In this way and if looking at education in its whole process, the education of children is embedded in the dialectical and dynamic relationships among people (younger and older), education and society. These ideas imply that in order to create a classless society a mass of people should be educated to gain socialist characteristics. At the same time, the socialist person is not only the condition but

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\(^{13}\) My translation.

\(^{14}\) My translation.

\(^{15}\) My translation.

\(^{16}\) Rather than to being with adults or alone.

\(^{17}\) There are several examples of children teaching children in Bronfenbrenner’s (1970) book entitled the Two Worlds of Childhood: US & USSR. For example, children in school usually got collective punishments and they sorted out on their groups the punishment the group assigned for the child at fault and also developed strategies how to help this child collectively so in the future the group will not suffer due to the same issues involved.
also the product of societal relations (Szarka, 1962). Moreover, it is argued by utilizing Makarenko’s (1949) work, that being a member of a community is the only form of life that enables the full development of the individual, because it teaches the child and the child feels happy only in this particular community. This notion of community diffuses in to all levels and ideas of education, including the kindergarten and constitutions of ‘the child’.

The role of education is, in corollary to these arguments, to experience the ‘objective’ dependence on the community (Madarász, 1963). If a child is a contributing member of the community then he or she must experience that the community works for his or her own benefits and vice versa. The condition of this statement is that it only happens this way if the community is lively and positive (Pálné Bakonyi, 1963). This condition underpins the goals of intentional community development in the kindergarten. It is argued that this collective belonging also teaches the children responsibility, to give up individualistic desires and that the child is dependent on this community (Pálné Bakonyi, 1963). As she continues, only this kind of community has the potential to resolve the antagonistic contradiction between the needs of the individual and the needs of the community (Pálné Bakonyi, 1963). Privileging either over the other might lead to individualism and egoism or asceticism, all of which were seen as detrimental to the development of the individual as well as the community (Pál Bakonyi et al., 1963). Developing the community and the need for the individual to feel dependent on the community, thus, are also claimed to lead to the development of society by overcoming a problem of capitalism: individual greed over community interests. Moreover, it is stated (Pálné Bakonyi, 1963) that the development of the characteristics of a community personality, community behaviour and community activity is only possible by someone living in a community. Thus, education emphasizes community to a great extent, living with the slogan used by Hermann and Komlósi (1972): “in the collective, by the collective, for the collective” (p. 13).

‘The child’ is constituted by these ideas in a continual process of acquiring a socialist personality through experiencing ‘belonging’ to the community. Through this collective belonging, certain but changing characteristics are obtained by ‘the child’ that are taught by children’s community and the teacher as well. ‘The child’ is thought about as primarily belonging to children’s communities, as a devoted and active member of the community but who also possesses a form of individualism that needs to be ‘tamed’, through education, to serve community needs. By learning to be a responsible member of a children’s community, ‘the child’ also becomes the educator of other children. Through this membership ‘the child’ acquires characteristics and feelings that, if impressed upon the child through education, make him or her able to become a productive member of the future socialist society and at the same time to develop that society by being that type of person.

These ideas make the present and the future of ‘the child’ equally important; he or she is not in the making but a ‘man-child’ at present. Not having all the characteristics that a socialist man should have does not make the child less than ‘man’. As Vág (1979) explains by drawing on Makarenko’s ideas, a man can be mis-

18 Depending on the relationship of the individual and society and the dynamic changes of those.
educated but that does not mean that he or she cannot be educated to have a socialist personality, even if education was misguided in the first five years of the person’s life (or later), the person can be re-educated at any age of his or her life (p. 181)\(^\text{19}\). Thus, no education, no learning and no experience is fatalistic. The endpoint of education is represented by personal qualities and characteristics that help ‘the child’ fulfill as a ‘man’ his or individual needs and what the socialist society requires of him or her; that is, to be a “public-spirited man interested in the well-being of the immediate and larger community” (Hermann & Komlósi, 1972, p. 10)\(^\text{20}\).

b. The ‘aware child’

From the three aims of the Program listed above, another theme that also emerges is around consciousness. The concept of ‘consciousness’ carries a particular understanding that I draw-up by using some examples from the Program. In the first area - physical and health care and development - the Program states:

the children should recognise their fundamental bodily needs and they should contribute actively to satisfy those; during a specific physical activity children should recognise what they are physically capable of (p. 10) ... the neat look should contribute to the formation and maintenance of positive relationships amongst children above being healthy ... the teacher should attempt to get parents’ cooperation in getting the right hairstyle that suits the child’s hair quality and shape of face (this is especially important in the case of girls) (p. 21-22) ... the formation of children’s need for cleanliness should start in the first year of kindergarten [age 3]. It should be gradually reached that children develop an inner need for order and cleanliness in relation to themselves, their clothes, their articles for personal use, moreover in regards to their surroundings. Children should notice dirt and disorderliness and above that they should actively participate in tidying it up by themselves without prompting” (p. 23)\(^\text{21}\).

From this excerpt, the process of intense habit formation in regards to bodily care, cleanliness and eating, and making children aware of those is explained in detail over six pages in the Program. These processes of habit formation are continued in children’s further education. In this way, the Program attaches educational aims to the formation of bodily habits and raises the importance of these habits by transforming them into platforms of teaching, learning and acquiring personality characteristics.

The Program explicitly states that “civilized and healthy habits are the basic foundations of community building” (p. 9)\(^\text{22}\). It continues by asserting that healthy relations are built upon healthy habits and looks, and are considered as the first phase of community building. Gaining an awareness of these and performing these habits with this particular mandate, contribute to the conscious formation of the community. Pál Bakonyi et al. (1963) explain that children’s awareness of their

\(^{19}\) My translation.

\(^{20}\) Education through the community is a vital element of the socialist kindergarten and more substantial work is required to discuss in more details how the ideas of community education fashions ‘the child’ as the subject of kindergarten education.

\(^{21}\) My translation but scaffolded with Hermann & Komlósi’s (1972) translation.

\(^{22}\) My translation.
personal physical abilities lays the foundation for the development of their capabilities and the development of socialist morals. At the same time as learning to fulfill these needs independently, they also develop an inner urge and need to carry out these actions (Program). The need for cleanliness is also transferred to children’s closer and then broader environment. Thus, I would argue, that in the Program, the concept of ‘consciousness’ is understood as a kind of self-awareness, the formation of needs and dispositions, and a heightened awareness of and self-initiated action upon those.

The concept of ‘consciousness’ is deeply rooted in dialectical materialism as Marx (1873) explains in Capital:

*My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of “the Idea,” he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurges of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of “the Idea.” With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought (http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/p3.htm). So, following Marx, what we think and how we see the world is not determined by consciousness but consciousness by existence, through the experiences with the ‘material world’: the nature of the physical and social reality. Thus, these experiences with the world make our ideas. As in the example, being clean and good looking and performing these acts and seeing the results of our actions form our consciousness in regards to cleanliness and appearance. In this way, by using the Marxian understanding of consciousness, socialist pedagogues understood education as having a great potential for the formation of the individual and her consciousness. Moreover, although the influence of heredity is not denied, it is held that only dispositions in the sense of ‘possibilities’ are inherited and the unfolding of these possibilities depends on the influences of which the individual is exposed to (Pál Bakonyi et al., 1963).

A further consequence of the application of Marxist theory is the rejection of the fixed developmental stages in the sense of Piaget ([1932]1960) as well as the alleged ‘fatalism’ of Freudian theory ([1905]1977) relating to the irreversible effects of infantile traumas. This refusal, however, seems to be softened in the Program, certain ‘predispositions’ and characteristics of ages are more or less acknowledged, as is the significance of early childhood (Hermann & Komlósi, 1972).

These discourses constitute ‘the child’ as inheriting certain abilities and dispositions, but also as having free potential of who he or she will become. The formation of ‘the child’ through kindergarten education thus has a great scope to instill needs and wants, develop abilities and dispositions and shape the child’s understanding of the world and also his or her morally guided actions upon those through his or her awareness. Education, thus, creates experiences to form this
child’s consciousness and through that to influence how she or he views the world\textsuperscript{23}.

Finally, it is important to note here, that there are other particular elements of education left without discussion that interplay in constituting ‘the child’. These are for example: worldview (as a characteristic of a person: Rubinstein, 1964); communist morality; more extensive analysis of community education; psychological understandings of personality as influenced by Marxist psychoanalysis (Hermann, 1986). The concept of ‘education’ that is inherent in the Program far exceeds education in its narrow definition of teaching and learning. ‘Education’ is understood as ‘nevelés’ that includes everything that surrounds the child and changes the child’s characteristics and behaviour (Pál Bakonyi et al., 1963), such as play, work and teaching (Hermann, 1972). The exploration of these components is also necessary and part of my overall project is to outline shifting understandings of the constitution of ‘the child’ in the Program and overall in socialist Hungary; but this exploration is not part of this writing.

The recent Australian early childhood policy field
Before I compare recent constitutions of ‘the child’ in Australia and those constitutions that I have outlined above, it is necessary to provide a background for this comparison in regards to the recent Australian early childhood education and care policy field. Since its inception, the issue of early education and care in Australia moved from a peripheral or private position to a “high profile, vigorously debated political and public issue” of today (Brennan, 1998, p. 1). Child care and early learning comprises an important segment of the recent Rudd (Australian Labor Party) government’s ‘education revolution’ agenda as it was announced in their \textit{New Directions for Early Childhood Education (2007)} policy (http://www.alp.org.au/download/new_directions_in_early_childhood_education.pdf). As one of the outcomes of this reform in Australia, every four year old will have the opportunity to participate in a centrally devised ‘early learning program’ that is play-based and is delivered by degree-qualified teachers\textsuperscript{24}. This right to education of a four-year old child is also proposed to be enshrined in an early care and education Act. The rationale of this policy is to raise productive future citizens and to increase the Australian economy’s output in the long term, as stated in the \textit{New Directions for Early Childhood Education (2007)}. This move towards a national early years learning program reinforces thinking about early years provisions as educational programs the thinking of which, while always present since the inceptions of first kindergartens in Australia, started to strengthen in the 1980s (Elliott, 2006). ‘The child’, as the subject of this reform agenda appears as a political agent (a ‘young citizen’) who holds the key to future prosperity and whose education is fashioned to serve this purpose (Millei, 2008, 2009).

As it was foreshadowed in the \textit{New Directions for Early Childhood Education (2007)} policy, on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} of July 2009 the Council of Australian Government’s (COAG)

\textsuperscript{23} The formation of worldview is another great area of kindergarten education and still needs to be teased out in the broad study to create a whole picture of the constitution of ‘the child’ through socialist kindergarten education.

\textsuperscript{24} It is proposed that all four year olds will be entitled to receive 15 hours of learning per week, for a minimum of forty weeks per year facilitated by a trained teacher.
endorsed the *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (referred to as EYLF hereafter). The EYLF was developed with the aim to ensure consistency across jurisdictions and in consultation with Australian and State and Territory Governments, early childhood experts and educators. After a period of familiarization it is expected that “each early childhood service will develop their own strategy to implement the Framework, taking their own unique circumstances into consideration” (http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Pages/EarlyYearsLearningFramework.aspx).

The EYLF is an outcome-based curriculum document (Spady, 1994) and lists five major learning outcomes. The emphasis in the EYLF is on children’s learning. Corresponding with the focus on learning, as a central concept in the document, the concept of ‘pedagogy’ is accentuated (instead of ‘education’) with the explicit aim to describe ways to facilitate children’s learning. The EYLF defines ‘pedagogy’ as “the educators professional practice especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision-making, teaching and learning” (p. 9). Since EYLF’s focus is on learning and the ‘learner’, the framework is constructed to cater for the ‘learner’ child “to create a better future for themselves and for the nation”, realizing COAG’s vision as quoted in the EYLF (p. 5, original emphasis). EYLF’s general vision for children’s learning is to enable children’s participation in every day life; to develop their interests, and to form their identities and understandings about the word, hence the title ‘Belonging, Being and Becoming’.

Contrasting ‘education’ and ‘the child’ in Hungary and Australia

The aim of this paper is to illuminate some taken-for-granted understandings of ‘the child’ in recent discourses of early childhood education and care in Australia. Early years discourses are strongly associated with ‘care’ and ‘education’ worldwide. These terms usually appear together when discussing provisions for young children in Australia. It can be argued, on the one hand, that these terms should be separated because of their conceptual difference. On the other hand, they need to be kept together because they are concerned with different but equally important and intertwined aspects of raising children (Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2009). The concept of ‘care’ conveys discourses of nurturing, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children, and is mostly used in relation to child care services in Australia (DEEWR, 2009; Elliott, 2006, Press, 2006). The concept of ‘education’ implies that learning is taking place; it is delivered by teachers, and is associated historically with preschools (DEEWR, 2009; Elliott, 2006, Press, 2006). As Grieve (1983) defines, ‘care’ means to ensure children’s physical and emotional wellbeing “where there is no explicit or systematic attempt to impart particular bodies of knowledge to the child” (p. 1). Consequently, if there are attempts to impart knowledge to the child those activities are considered ‘education’ (Grieve,

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25 The EYLF is part of the Australian Government’s National Quality Agenda for the early years, a reform agenda developed by the Council of Australian Government’s (COAG).
26 I am conscious of the fact that the Australian constitutions of ‘the child’ were not outlined in this article. Here, however, I still attempt to draw on a few dominant constitutions that recent discourses of early childhood education produce.
The concepts of ‘care’ and ‘education’ therefore constitute ‘the child’ differently.

The conceptual difference between ‘care’ and ‘education’ is also apparent in the provisions for the early years. This distinction was conditioned by several subsequent historical, political and policy shifts that created a spectrum of institutions delivering particular types of specific provisions (differentiated by ‘care’ and / or ‘education’) for children. For example, discourses of ‘care’ imbu ed women’s demand for quality childcare during the 1970s feminist movement (Brennan, 1982). From the 1980s the increasing number of early years provisions adopted an integrated model of ‘care’ and ‘education’ in which learning programs were delivered (Elliott, 2006). These particular services however, in regards to the care and / or education they provide, differ widely by service types, by particular States and by the availability of trained staff to deliver educational programs (DEEWR, 2009). In addition to this complexity, the responsibility to ensure the welfare of children (personal health and hygiene as part of ‘care’) shifted more and more to the home, while the provision of early ‘education’ remained in the expert hands of teachers (Brennan, 1994).

The *EYLF*’s aim is “to extend and enrich children’s learning from birth to five years” (p. 5); as an educational program, its core is children’s learning (p. 10). The Hungarian *Program*’s aim, in contrast, is to form the personality of the child. Children’s wellbeing, safety and the creation and maintenance of a nurturing relationship have important considerations in both frameworks and they all appear as intertwined with children’s learning in the *EYLF*, and with “the harmonious and versatile development of the child’s personality” in the *Program* (Pálné Bakonyi & Szabadi, 1971). In the *Program* health care and hygiene, play, work and didactics were used (and are still used today [Ministry of Culture and Education, 1997]), as part of curriculum and pedagogy for the development of personal characteristics, or in other words: to shape the child to become certain kind of a *person/man*, which is psychologically defined. The *EYLF* understands ‘becoming’ as the development of “children’s identities, knowledge, understandings, capacities, skills and relationships change during childhood … [and] emphasises learning to participate fully and actively in society” (p.7), thus to become certain kind of *individual or individuality*. Being an individual, having an ‘identity’ here is defined on social and cultural terms: to belong “first to a family, a cultural group, a neighbourhood and a wider community” (p.7).

The further examination of some particularities of ‘belonging’ helps here to further develop the nature of differences between the conceptualizations of ‘the child’ in the two frameworks. The difference between concepts of ‘belonging’ lies in the ways in which the community of ‘the child’ and his or her relations to the community are imagined. The *EYLF* defines ‘belonging’ and ‘identity’ in the following way:

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27 For example, long day child care, family day care, in-home care, occasional care, mobile child care services that were established to care for children while the mothers were in the workforce, while preschool is considered as an educational service etc. (Brennan, 1994; Elliott, 2006; Press, 2006)

28 I only mention these elements of care because I covered these in this paper. There are also other elements of care that are used for learning, such as eating as part of self-care.
Belonging acknowledges children’s interdependence with others and the basis of relationships in defining *identities*. In early childhood, and throughout life, relationships are crucial to a sense of belonging. Belonging is central to being and becoming in that it shapes who children are and who they can become (p. 7, *my emphasis*).

While there is a similarity here between the frameworks: ‘the child’ is constituted as interdependent with others, the difference is that in the *EYLF’s conceptualization*, ‘belonging’ to a community defines the child’s *identity*, which is one of the (fluid) outcomes of learning to belong\(^{29}\). In the Hungarian *Program*, quite differently, the community forms the characteristics of the *personality* that is associated with the psychological processes, psychological differences and the human nature of the individual. The personality of ‘the child’ in the *EYLF* is only apparent in the pre-dispositions and dispositions of ‘the child’ to learning (for example pp. 5, 8, 9, 19, 32, 33, 34, 38).

‘The child’ as understood in the *Program* as having a role to change society through his or her involvement within child communities through which children teach each other and form each other’s personal characteristics, thus subsequently and indirectly change society by being a certain *kind of a person*. In the *EYLF* ‘the child’ is constituted as an active member of communities, however the types of participation open to ‘the child’ is undetermined (p. 25 and 26) or confined to learning or learning experiences (p. 12, 14, 24, 32). While children’s participation gained an importance in *EYLF*’s discourses, children’s active participation in everyday practices (including all practices and not only learning) remains to be fully embraced. Changing society with their actions that has immediate results on society is understood as the future task for children, when they become adults: “All children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation” (The 2008 Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians quoted in *EYLF*, p. 5).

The increased emphasis on socio-cultural theories recently in early childhood education in Australia, and in the *EYLF* in particular, resulted in understanding ‘the child’ more frequently as a member of communities at the present (Australian Government Department of Education, 2009; Fleer et al., 2006). As the *EYFL* explicates: “the early childhood years are not solely preparation for the future but also about the present” (p. 7). Development and learning are conceptualized in socio-cultural understandings as a growing ability to participate in adults’ activities (Rogoff, 2003); thus, children and adults’ life-worlds appear to be less separated with children participating more meaningfully in adults’ worlds\(^{30}\). Strengthening discourses around children’s rights from the late 1980s as a result of *The Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) and the emergence of the New Sociology of Childhood (James & Prout, 1997; Mayall, 2002) also contributed to

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\(^{29}\) It is important to mention here that the *EYLF* incorporates postructural perspectives on identity that defines it as always in flux.

\(^{30}\) It is important to note here, however, that discourses regarding children’s participation in their own and adults’ life-worlds mostly remain tokenistic and rarely appear in everyday practices (Millei, 2008, 2009).
conceptualize ‘the child’ as strong and competent participant in their own lives at the present. Moreover, the New Sociology of Childhood considers children as change-agents in their communities. It could be argued then that according to both conceptualizations, ‘the child’ has a particular part in shaping society. The ‘man child’ of the Program has the capacity to change society through undergoing a planned formation of his or her personality by the environment and / or the teacher, or by participating and therefore changing children’s communities and hence indirectly changing society. ‘The child’ as an ‘individuality’ in the EYFL is constituted as agentic, but only those avenues are legitimated for him or her by discourses of EYLF where his or her participation contributes to her or his explicit learning. In this way, changing society remains a future task for the Australian ‘child’, it will only become possible when he or she acquires the capacities and knowledge to do so. Those avenues that open up ways for children’s present participation in society remain to be envisioned and are awaiting expression in discourses and everyday practices.
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