

Early Literacy and Inclusion

Learning to read and write is a matter of developing a sense of who you are becoming - a matter of identity. This paper explores possible connections between inclusion (Madsen, 2005; UNESCO, 1994) and early literacy using data from the EASE project - a recently finished research project on early literacy and transition from preschool to school. It seeks to open up new ethical and pedagogical spaces for researching and teaching early literacy within a social pedagogy framework (Broström, 2006; OECD, 2001, 2006). Drawing on a socio-cultural understanding of early literacy (Gee, 2008; Kress, 1997; Street, 1995), bringing in the concept of recognition (Honneth, 2003, 2006) and perspectives from the Deleuzo-Guttarian conceptual palette (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, 1996), the paper analyses literacy events (Gee, 2008; Heath, 1982) to illustrate key points. Data has been collected using a customized version of the Learning Story documentation tool (Carr, 2005). The paper argues that inclusive early childhood education practice and policy needs to go beyond 'breaking the reading code' and the underlying binary thinking of able/unable. It concludes by suggesting that stakeholders in early literacy must recognize promoters and barriers for inclusion and commit themselves to the transformation of early literacy practice through a new agenda that emphasizes meaning making, recognition and social change.