

Implementation of Language Policy in a Swedish Multicultural Early Childhood School: A Development Project

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Abstract : This presentation focuses a development project aiming at developing and documenting the steps taken at a multilingual, multicultural K-5 school, with the aim to improve the achievement levels of the pupils by focusing language and literacy development across the schedule in a digital classroom, and in all units of the school. This pre-formulated aim, thus, may be said to adhere to neoliberal educational and accountability policies in terms of its focus on digital learning, learning results, and national curriculum standards. In particular the project aimed at improving the collaboration between the teachers, the leisure time unit, the librarians, the mother tongue teachers and bilingual study counselors. This is a school environment characterized by cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and professional pluralization. The overarching aims of the research project were to scrutinize and analyze the factors enabling and obstructing the implementation of the Language Policy in a digital classroom. Theoretical framework: We apply multi-level perspectives in the analyses inspired by Uljens' ideas about interactive and interpersonal first order (teacher/students) and second order(principal/teachers and other staff) educational leadership as described within the framework of discursive institutionalism, when we try to relate the Language Policy, educational policy, and curriculum with the administrative processes. Methodology/research design: The development project is based on recurring research circles where teachers, leisure time assistants, mother tongue teachers and study counselors speaking the mother tongue of the pupils together with two researchers discuss their digital literacy practices in the classroom. The researchers have in collaboration with the principal developed guidelines for the work, expressed in a Language Policy document. In our understanding the document is, however, only a part of the concept, the actions of the personnel and their reflections on the practice constitute the major part of the development project. One and a half years out of three years have now passed and the project has met with a row of difficulties which shed light on factors of importance for the progress of the development project. Field notes and recordings from the research circles, a survey with the personnel, and recorded group interviews provide data on the progress of the project. Expected conclusions: The problems experienced deal with leadership, curriculum, interplay between aims, technology, contents and methods, the parents as customers taking their children to other schools, conflicting values, and interactional difficulties, that is, phenomena on different levels, ranging from school to a societal level, as for example teachers being substituted as a result of the marketization of schools. Also underlying assumptions from actors at different levels create obstacles. We find this study and the problems we are facing utterly important to share and discuss in an era with a steady flow of refugees arriving in the Nordic countries.

Keywords : early childhood education, language policy, multicultural school, school development project

Conference Title : ICETE 2018 : International Conference on Education, Teaching and E-learning

Conference Location : Tokyo, Japan

Conference Dates : March 27-28, 2018