

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF CHILD INITIATED PEDAGOGIES

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INTRODUCTION

2012: As a result of similar interests in exploring pedagogical practices that support young children's learning, a collaboration formed at EECERA and conversation turned to action

Colleagues from Finland, Estonia, England, and the USA came together to investigate child-initiated pedagogy that would support Democratically Appropriate Practices (DeAP)

OUR COLLABORATIVE GROUP



OUR AIM IS TO TRANSFORM AND
DEMOCRATISE EVERYDAY PEDAGOGICAL
PRACTICES
IN EARLY YEARS SETTINGS
TOWARDS PARTICIPATORY, OPEN
DEMOCRACY.



BEGINNING OF THE LONGITUDINAL WORK

2013: First some exploration of how teachers saw the process of decision making in the classroom

- Ethnographic approach:
 - Diaries of a typical week
 - Looking at child-initiated practices naturally occurring
 - No definitions of democratic or child initiated pedagogy
 - Let the definition emerge as we gathered examples of practice

QUESTIONS

Original Questions Posed:

1. How are decisions reached about activities?
2. What kinds of things are decided?
3. Who decides?

Both teachers' and children's voices were "heard"

INSIGHTS

The Socio-cultural context was ripe for this look at child-initiated practices

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child honors the child's voice
- European Constitution
- Nordic Welfare State
- Global neo-liberalism focus on testing and competition rather than individualism
- Economic, “investment” ethos rather than human focus
- Distrust/blaming of professionals for failures in the educational process

INSIGHTS

There is a difference between child-initiated pedagogy and child-centred pedagogy

- Child-initiated – participative and open democracy, relying on the child, the teacher and the environment as active participants
- Child-centred – an umbrella term covering a wide range of practices that purport to be focused on child's needs, but not necessarily reliant on their participatory decision-making

'Child-Centred' – our analysis shows and we argue that 'child-centred' is applied in the context of adult considering the child's needs and developmental levels



'Child-initiated' - we focus on children in their social contexts. Their interests and motivations are seen as the driving force in planning, organising and managing children's learning...

...but always in the context of genuine exchange of ideas between children's and adults' worlds.



SHIFTING THE LANDSCAPE

Child-initiated pedagogy: shift in pedagogy to support learning, acknowledge the power and strength of the child

Examining the funds of knowledge that children bring to the early years setting (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992)

Exploring the elements of emergent curriculum for pedagogical strategies (e.g., Jones & Nimmo, 1994)

Investigating the impact of socio-cultural factors on the pedagogical approaches

DEMOCRATICALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES

Our aim is to transform and democratise everyday pedagogical practices in early years settings. Practice is, however, always dynamic and therefore our aim is *not* to present one model of child initiated pedagogy to be implemented more widely. Nor do we aim to suggest what practitioners should do in their daily work in their varying contexts. The aim of the research project is to research the contexts in which teachers engage in documenting child initiated pedagogies in their classrooms and schools and to identify how child initiated pedagogies emerge in each setting. The struggle towards democracy and Democratically Appropriate (DeAP) is a dynamic process. Inspiration for societal development requires and is based on awareness for pedagogy, participation and social creativity .

STRUGGLE IN SETTINGS AND PRACTICES

Backgrounds of individual children & teachers bring their funds of knowledge and cultural capital into pedagogical practice

Negotiating between these is a potential source of struggle for power (cf. need for Deliberative Democracy)

**Consciousness of different worlds must prevail with the teacher
(Moll & Gonzalez; Bourdieu)**

CONCEPTS AND FRAMES

Contexts – early childhood education is always linked with children's families and their life histories and communities and broader histories, cultures and societies in varied and complex ways

Childhoods are socially constructed – researching childhoods requires a focus on institutional, historical, intercultural and culture- and country-specific aspects of childhoods

Construction of knowledge – knowledge is constructed within social interactions, i.e. also within the social interaction between adults and children.

Communality - Both individual and, to a degree, collective aspects are a part of pedagogy & everyday practices.
Pedagogical theory and pedagogical practice require an update by each generation (dynamic and transforming)

Culture-specific nature of pedagogy: each early years setting/school and country interprets and adapts theory and pedagogy according to their own traditions and societal situations

NEXT PAPER

Looks at ...

A Collective Method of Participation – a Case Example from Finland

A COLLECTIVE METHOD OF PARTICIPATION – A CASE EXAMPLE FROM FINLAND

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PRINCIPLES..

Synthesis of critical pedagogy and place-based education; that of critical themes & ecological themes

Pro educational policy & practice duly regarding place

'Places' cannot be viewed as natural: A place is crafted by culture, as well as an experience of place is penetrated by cultural & institutional forces

→ Power relations are included inevitably.

Participation to keep involved & interested in matters of close environment → action research

(Gruenewald 2003a; 2003b; 2005; Lanas 2008; Smith 2002; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1995)

DELIBERATIVE & PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Direct decision-making based on collective dialogue & broad participation with proper reflection on alternatives

Perhaps easier to apply in ECEC context (rather than in citizenship):

**Phenomena of everyday life, consequences rather direct,
expertise on their own matters..**

(Setälä 2014; Hart 1992; 1997)

DIMENSIONS OF PLACE

Place: multiple ecological levels

Physical-locational

Sensual-emotional

Socio-cultural

(Bronfenbrenner 1979; Karjalainen 1997; Lanas 2008)

CRITICISMS...

The "thick description" of Critical pedagogy: transition of consciousness → truly regarding place?

The lack of conserving under the strive to decolonize & rehabilitate

Teacher as a Mediator vs. Liberator

(Bowler 2008)

APPLICATION

This application is concerned with the direct learning environment: the school facilities

Learning environment shaped by the surrounding culture(s)?

Aim: To share decisions concerning the Learning environment (meso level/sensual-emotional) in a genuinely accessible way

(Bronfenbrenner 1979; Karjalainen 1997)

CONTEXT

One of the few actual cities (as defined by EU) of Finland

- an urban environment with urban challenges of class, status ethnicity, culture
- which manifest as a school for special need (adjacent to school without special needs)

CASE OF FOCUS

Two schools; Hannunniittu and C.O. Malm schools.

- Altogether about 550 students (from preschool, age of 6 to sixth grade, age of 12)

The preschool students with special needs

- 44 students in four groups
- All six years old

Tradition of child-initiated pedagogy and participatory methods

(e.g. Kinos, Kinos, Niemelä & Selinummi 2010)

COLLECTIVE METHOD

Post-It + photograph method was used to capture the individual insights to find out and solve a common issue (through appropriate means of communication!) in the nature of deliberative democracy (cf. Kansalaisraati)

**Students similar to a community of practice
→ With common interest, assignment & goal**

(Smith 2003, 2009)

THE INSTRUMENTS OF ASSESSMENT

Comfortable and cozy (smiling face)



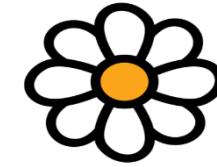
Scary and dangerous (horror face)



Noisy and restless (exclamation mark)



Beautiful (flower)



Ugly (mouth downwards face)



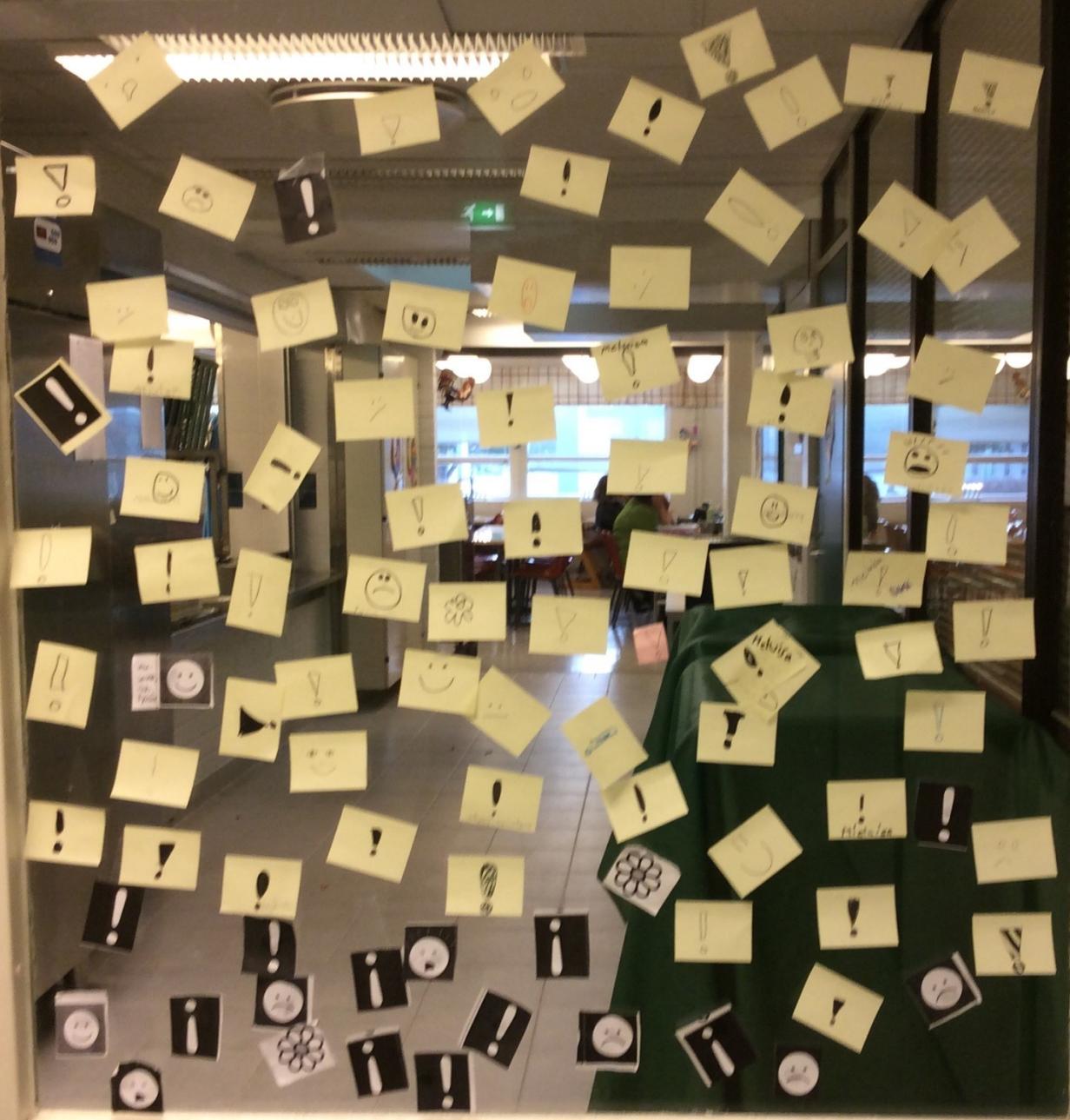
RATIONALÉ OF USED METHODS

**The children are willing and able to participate
→ means of expression, consciousness of the matter in decision (what they perceive)**

Genuine participation

Actual consequences of participation

(Hart 1992; 1997)



CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING, OPINION OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (INTERIORS)

<http://blog.edu.turku.fi/hannuncomalm2016ops/tyoskentelya/tyoskentelypaivakirja-2015/>

RESULTS

Preschoolers perceived the settings in a particularly sensual-emotional way

(rather than e.g physical aspects, although these in turn shaped the sensual-emotional experience)

Places with no experience (i.e. Craft class; technical work) were unmarked by preschoolers

Students' self-designed and made facilities was evaluated very pleasing (next two slides)





CONSEQUENCES

Were duly noted by the student council, a proposition was formed, especially concerning the scary & dangerous places

Principal put the propositions in action

Project will continue concerning the outdoor facilities





CONCLUSIONS

Actual participation is shaped with real consequences

Although adult-initiated, provided actual opportunity of participation for children

Method does not necessarily have an age limit!

(Hart 1992; 1997)

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THIRD PAPER: INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN AND THEIR RIGHT FOR SELF-DETERMINATION WITHIN CHILD-INITIATED PEDAGOGIES

A CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSION

Self-determination: relational or essentialist concept?

More than an object, self-determination is observed as a framework for adult-child relationship (Hutchby, 2007)

In other words, self-determination is a way in which adults and children communicate (a form of communication, see Baraldi, 2009)

Self-determination is the name of a form of communication where the child's contribution is treated as

- ‘autonomous’ (and not to be ‘programmed’)
- personalized (and not a role performance)
- accepted (and not assessed)

INDIVIDUAL OR SOCIAL

Self-determination is both individual and social

Self-determination is an instance of individual agency...

...however to exist it needs to ‘make a difference, or in other words to be accepted. This imply renouncing to control...

in other words, self-determination is the structure which connects individuals who do not reduce the other to a projection of their expectations, preferences, morality

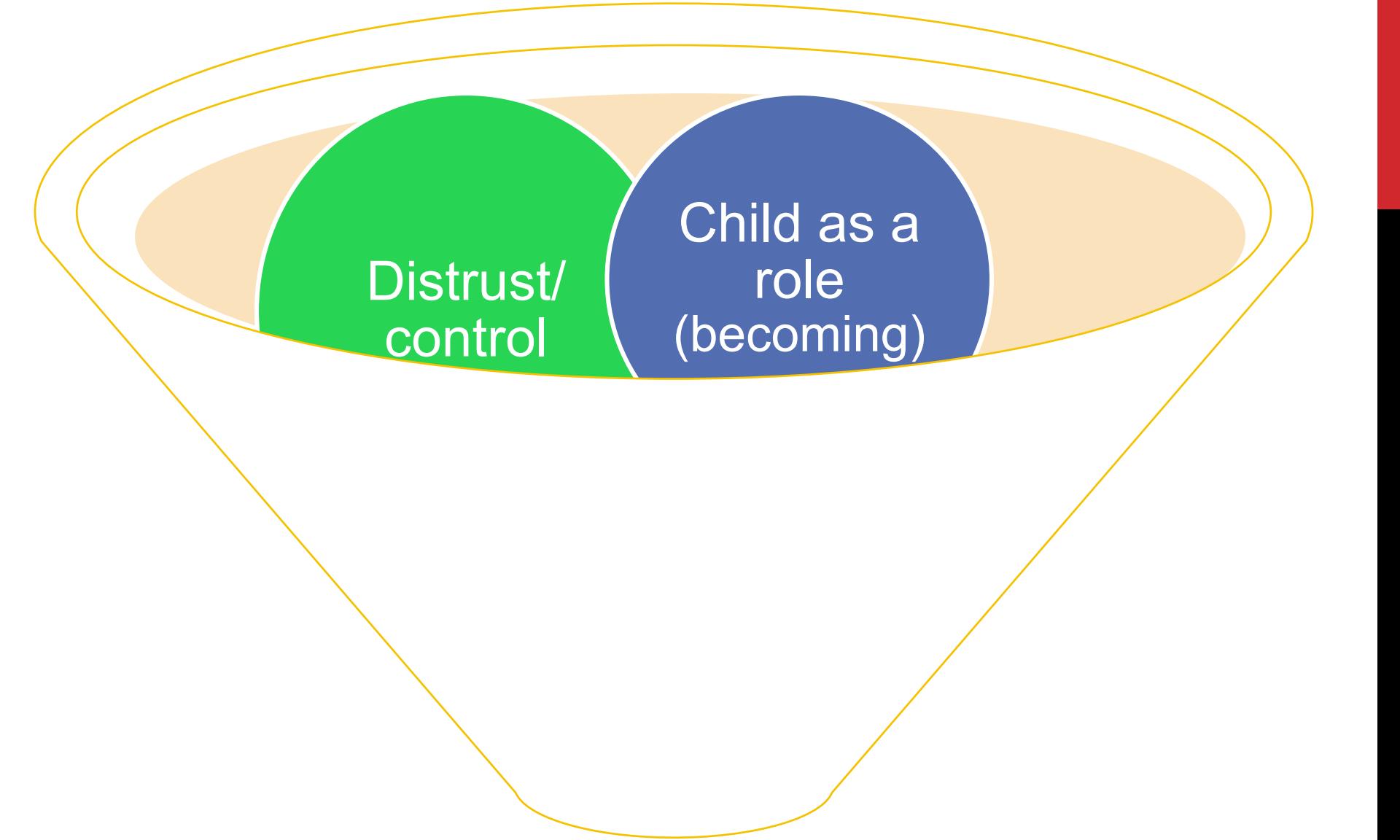
A NAME, MANY CONCEPTS

We observe self-determination when contributions from the child are treated as autonomous, personalized and accepted. Promoting self determination implies promoting autonomy, **risking trust** in the child, observe the child as a person and not as the social role of 'becoming'.

However...

in the public discourse there are many conflicting concepts of self-determination. Recently, Scollan and Farini (2014) have identified that the dominant concept of self-determination in a vast group of EY practitioners in London is different.

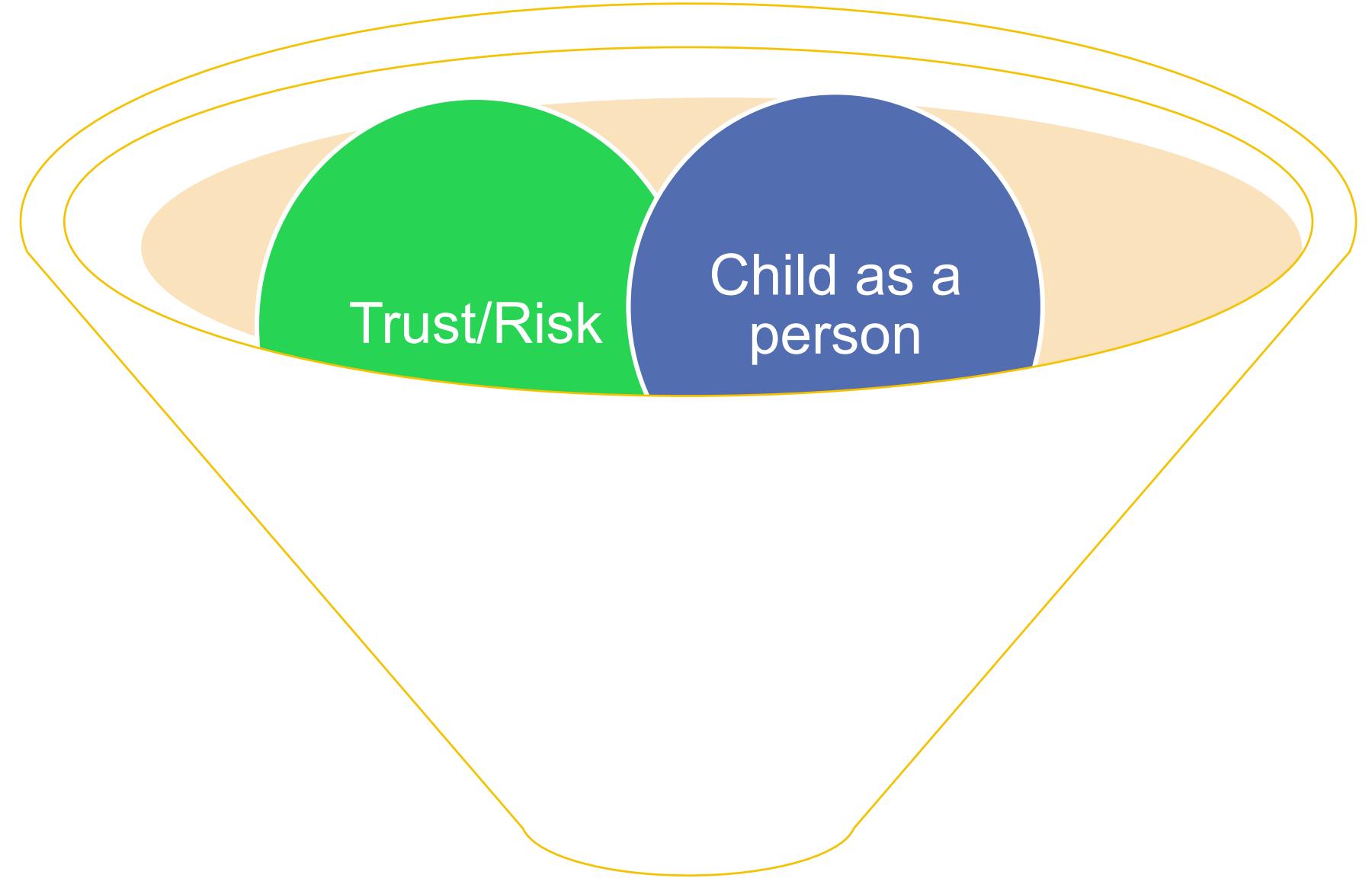
Self-determination means protecting the child from harm and risks, and supporting the child in the right developmental journey, until he or she will be able to self-determine his or her life (see also Qvortrup, 1999)



Distrust/
control

Child as a
role
(becoming)

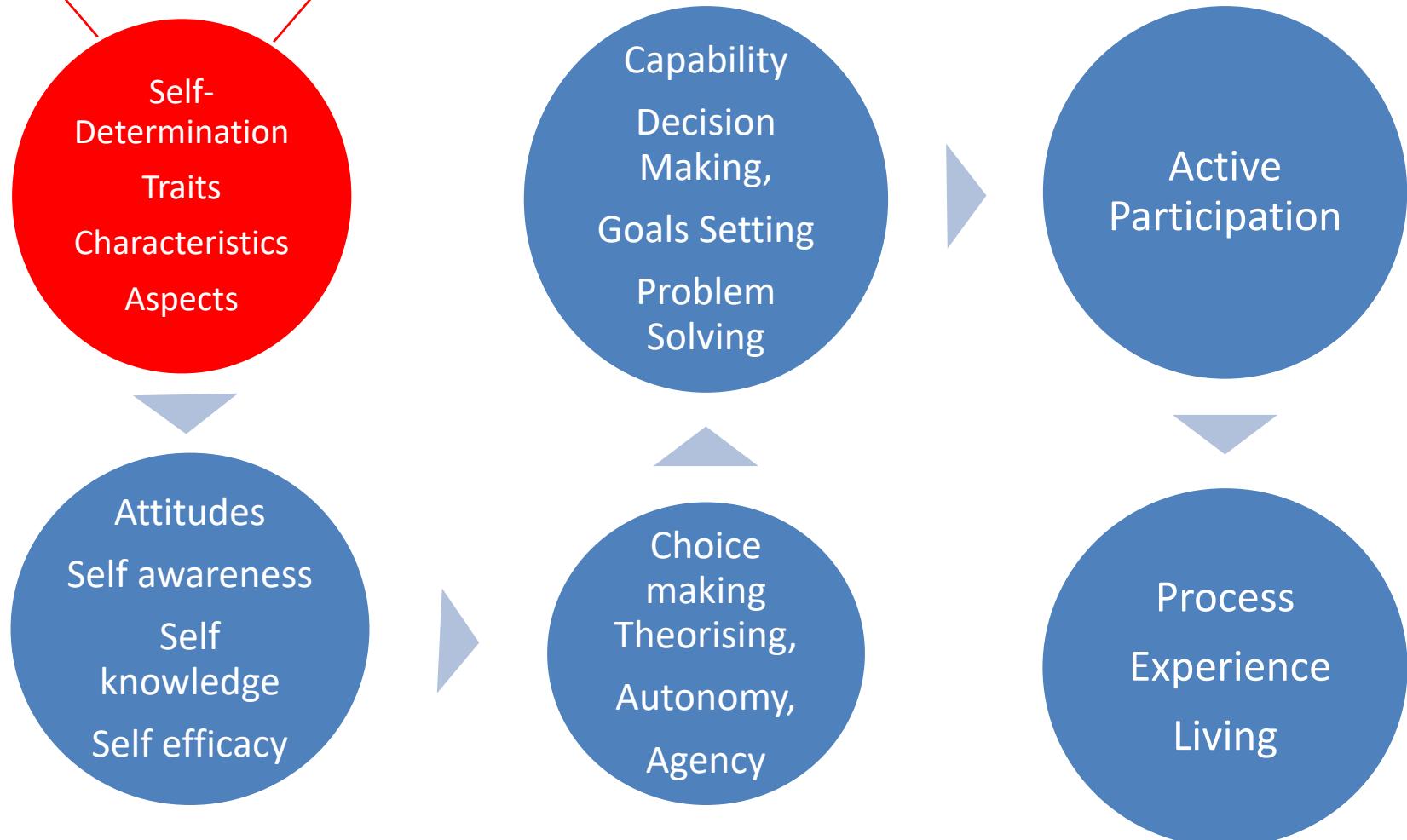
Child-centred pedagogies, self-determination as a developmental achievement



Child-initiated pedagogies, self-determination as form of communication in the present

(Farini, 2012)

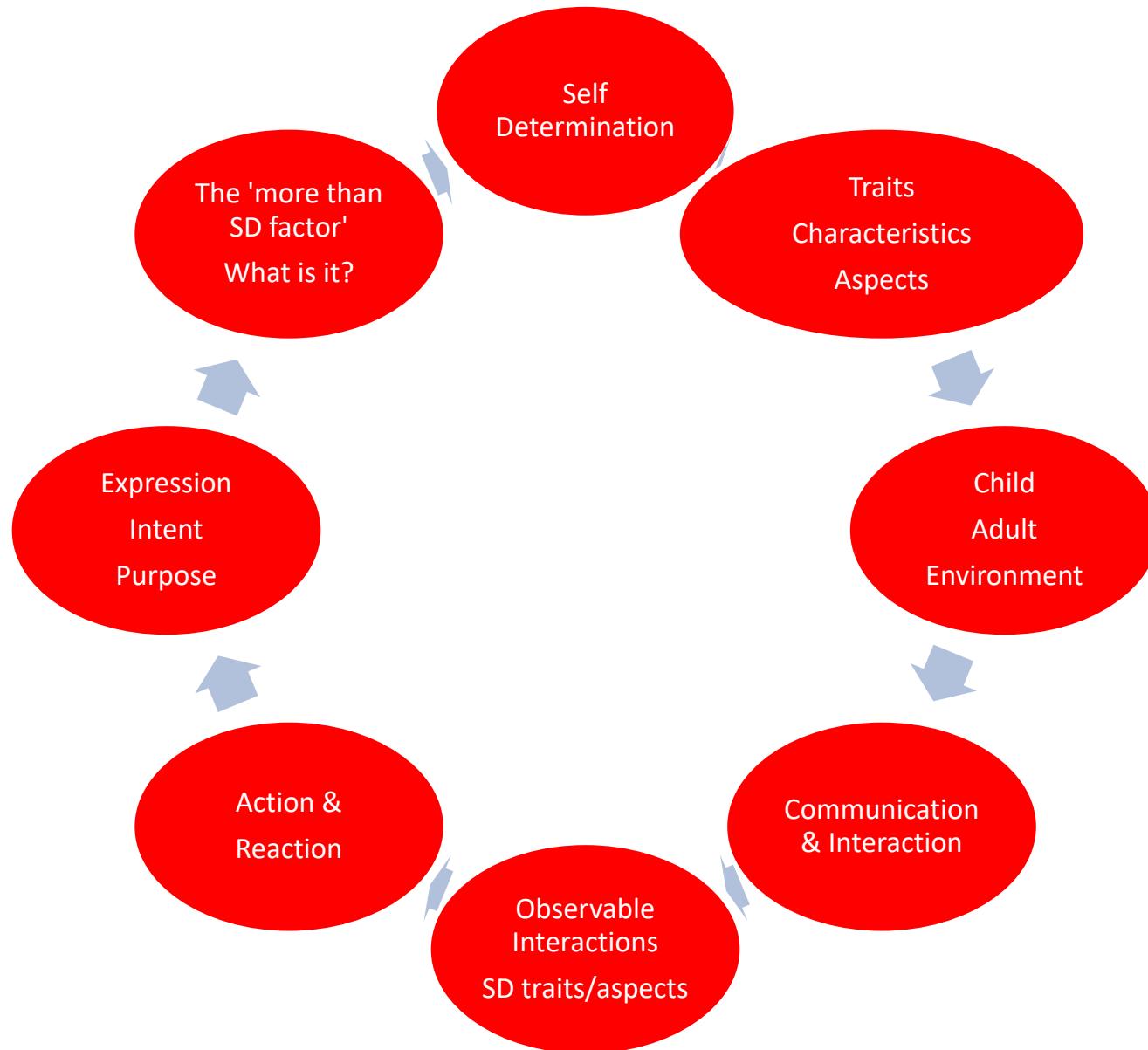
THE EMPIRICAL DIMENSIONS OF SELF-DETERMINATION



SELF-DETERMINATION

Example of child-initiated (Leena...)

SELF-DETERMINATION AND THE SOCIAL



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