

The meanings of contemporary parenting. Polish middle class parents in the learning process

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RESEARCH CONTEXT

- After the political-socio-cultural changes of 89', Poles are confronted with the option/necessity to formulate their own life projects, including those related to parenthood.
- Beginning from the 90s there is increasing social pressure (laws and administrative arrangements) and individual parental need to become involved in their children's education.
- The inception of parental initiative groups (representatives of the Bernstein's „new middle class”) in 2012 in large Polish cities spurred the study which the groups became an important part of. The groups' objective was to establish the first unschooling groups and so called quasi-schools (Uryga, Wiatr, 2015):
 - Groups with no formal school status.
 - Founded based on the principles relevant for a joint homeschooling or unschooling project bringing together several tens of families (like the concept of Meighan's flexi schooling).
 - Drawing on progressivism, but also on the modern psychological and neurological concepts.

Currently, over 20 such establishments operate in Poland and more are about to start.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The parental actions exemplify a particular kind of effort - to make sense of one's own experience, which is a learning process in a wider socio-cultural context. This draws on neo-liberal ideology, with its discourse of individual choice and responsibility. It promotes values such as freedom, autonomy, being active, rationality and self-development (Rose, Olsen and others). Parental discursive and non-discursive practices produce a particular family environment for living and educating the child.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

- Constructionism (Berger, Luckmann, 1966) and post-structuralism (M. Foucault, N. Rose)
- Modern concepts of learning: (1) Situated learning (Wenger, 1998) (2) Social learning (Illeris, 2002, Jarvis, 2009), (3) biographical learning (Alheit, 2009)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) How do the parents interpret their own parenting (mothering and fathering)?
- 2) How do they get involved in creating developmental and educational spaces for their children?
- 3) What is the relationship between the processes of learning, the experience of being in transit and the language /linguistic creation of self and the family environment?
- 4) What is the status of knowledge?

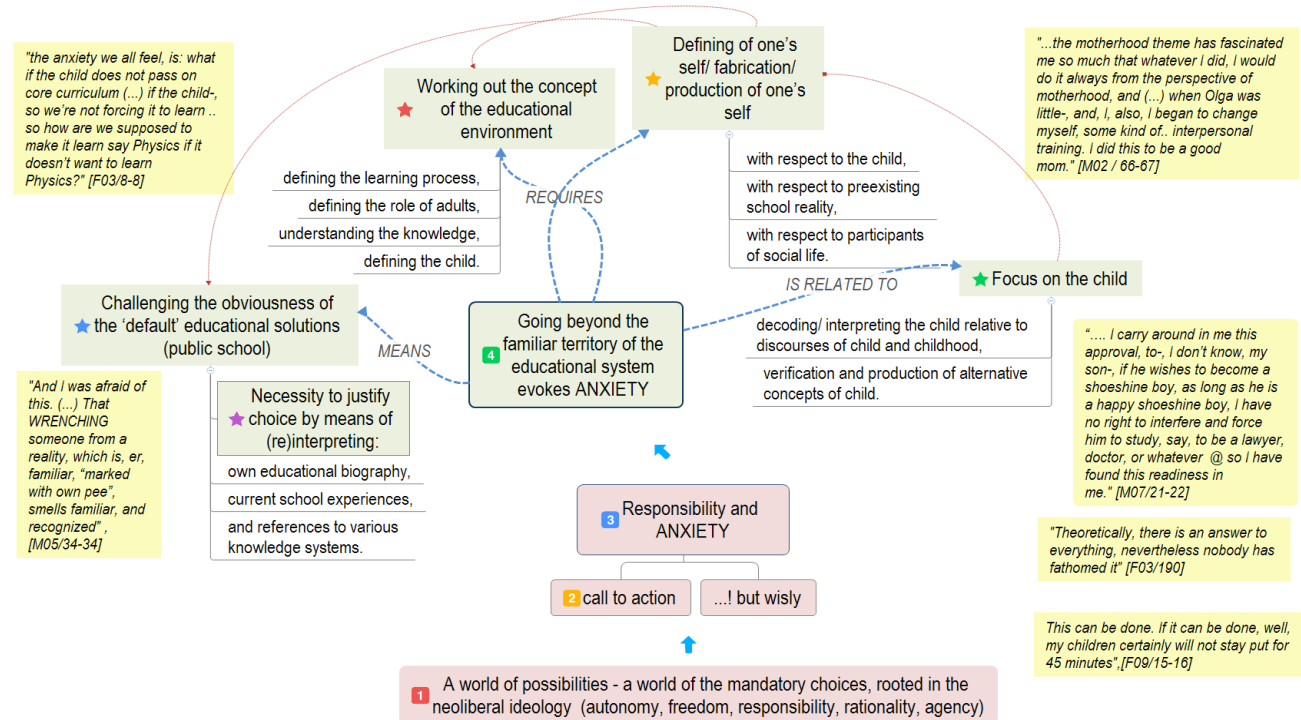
METHOD

WHERE? In a large Polish city WHEN? From 2014

WHOM? 11 mothers and fathers of preschool and schoolchildren who actively seek or create (in their opinion) appropriate educational environments for their children. All the parents make up so called new middle class (Bernstein, 1977). Critical case sampling.

Data collection: HOW? In-depth, individual interview (Flick, 1995).

Data analysis: HOW? GTM (Charmaz, 2006, Clarke, 2005) and discourse analyze (Keller, 2012). The analyzes are in process.



PRERLIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

The readiness to create new learning environments is founded on three basic categories:

- 1) Being the parent/ mother/father (★)
 - 2) Defining a child (★)
 - 3) Interpreting the school system (★)
- effort to understand each other: respective rights and responsibilities, condition
 - current (non)discursive (re)production and justification of some knowledge about being a mother / father / child, about learning etc.

ANXIETY pervades all three basic categories and relates to others: SEARCHING NEW SOLUTIONS, RISK and RESPONSIBILITY.

ANXIETY inspires the search for justification/ legitimacy of one's own decisions and choices. This search takes place across possible knowledge systems among others: psychology (development and self-development, protection of the psyche, therapy, self-development, authenticity, expression), economics (effectiveness, efficiency), healthcare (health), neurology (brain development). This search for meaning and simultaneous generation of knowledge - is changing/ becoming / learning (Jarvis, 2009).

Several topics for consideration and discussion: (1) methodologically: pros and cons of joining constructionist perspective of poststructuralism (2) analytically: the language of the fathers and mothers / importance of knowledge in the learning process / production of non-middle class.

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