
Pedagogical Narrations: Pedagogical Processes and Curricular Trajectories

Early Childhood Pedagogy Network

What Are Pedagogical Narrations?

The word “pedagogy” has taken on a life of its own. For many of us in early childhood education, pedagogy may be best known by its developmental conceptualization as the study of how learning happens or how to teach students to make them learn better. Rooted in this conceptualization, pedagogical narrations are commonly reduced to collecting traces or evidence of individual children meeting developmental or curriculum standards. However, we at the ECPN work with a notion of pedagogy that is larger than this. The ECPN thinks alongside scholars such as Vintimilla, Land, and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2023) and enacts a pedagogical project that is about subject formation— about how to live well with others and create conditions for more livable worlds. Within this notion of pedagogy, pedagogical narrations are not a reiteration of developmental standards; they become “a political and ethical practice [that] can be used to interrogate [...] practices in order to support inclusive and contextual pedagogical and curricular processes” (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2022, p. 16).

The processes of pedagogical narration have a rich history inspired by pedagogical documentation in Reggio Emilia, Italy and Sweden, and learning stories in New Zealand. In Canada, other provinces also use terms such as “pedagogical

documentation” (Government of British Columbia, 2008). The names are as diverse as their conceptualizations, underlying intentions, and specific processes, which vary widely across contexts. However, at their most basic level, they all serve a common purpose: collecting traces of children’s educational experiences that are the catalyst for curriculum making.

The term “pedagogical narration” was adopted by British Columbia in 2008 when the first Early Learning Framework was introduced to the province. In the Early Learning Framework, pedagogical narration referred to “a process to make children’s learning visible” (BC Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 14). Since 2008, the province’s early years field, including the ECPN, has continued to think with and complexify understandings of pedagogical narrations. In the most recent iteration of the Early Learning Framework, pedagogical narrations are described as “the process of noticing and collecting moments from daily

“Our pedagogical project is about subjects and world formations. It is about figuring out how to live well with others (human and more-than-human) and enacting transformative relations that respond to, and (re)compose with, the times we live in.”

—Cristina Delgado Vintimilla,
Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw & Nicole Land (2023, p. 9)

practice and sharing these with colleagues, children, and families to make children’s learning processes and inquiries as well as educators’ pedagogical choices visible and open to interpretation and reflection” (BC Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 51). Pedagogical narrations are a non-linear, fluid, and dynamic process involving (in no particular order) the pedagogy of listening, critical reflection, pedagogical choices, collecting traces, making traces visible, collaborative dialogue, and linking to the Early Learning Framework (BC Ministry of Education, 2019).

What Do Pedagogical Narrations Entail?

The ECPN defines pedagogical narration as the stories of pedagogical processes and curricular trajectories. Pedagogical narration requires foresight, dialogue, exchanges, and the careful curation of ideas. It does not consist of a simple description of what happened, but rather intentional interpretation involving “pedagogical questions, concerns

and orientations that help discern and give value to what happened, [as well as] propel into cultivating new forms of knowing, acting and living (through questioning, experimenting, fabulating, enacting, inventing trying out, daring, figuring out, stumbling to name a few)” (Vintimilla & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2021).

Pedagogists cultivate spaces for collaborative dialogue with educators, children, families, and the wider community. They think alongside others about collective commitments, examining the conditions of our time and how to intentionally respond to those conditions. By closely observing and questioning the everyday happenings of classrooms, pedagogists engage pedagogical narration to uncover what matters and why it matters. These moments are documented and studied in depth through intentional collaboration. This studying is often overlooked in conventional approaches to pedagogical documentation that simply state what happened. The rigorous process of studying together and constructing “meaning and mattering” (Hodgins, 2019, p. 37) is at the heart of our conceptualization of pedagogical narrations.

Pedagogical narrations are a method, among many others, that pedagogists and educators might use to study the situated histories, relations, conditions, and demands of their specific contexts. Through pedagogical narrations, we resist conceptualizing early childhood education as only a caregiving profession and reconfigure our work as grounded in collective ethical and educational commitments. For instance, the pedagogical narration “[X is for Elsa and O is for Anna: Letters That](#)

[Tell Stories](#)” (ECPN, 2021) opens up the possibility of taking children’s writing practices seriously as a collective social practice of storying children’s worlds (ECPN, 2021). You can view this pedagogical narration on the Pedagogical Narrations page of the ECPN website. It is important to note that the Pedagogical Narrations page on the ECPN website does not offer a blueprint or step-by-step guide on how to do pedagogical narrations. Rather than following a formula, pedagogical narrations are a collective endeavour that invites educators and pedagogists into a continuous process of questioning, imagining, and responding to the conditions and possibilities of their work. To see examples of how pedagogists and educators think with pedagogical narrations in their work, we invite readers to visit the Pedagogical Narrations page of the [ECPN website](#) at <https://ecpn.ca/category/pedagogical-narrations/>.

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