

Unpacking the 'ideal learner': A critical discourse analysis of Croatian National Curriculum through figurative language and frames

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Narrative and metaphor may be used as tools for understanding or framing of education policies or practices (Hanne and Kaal, 2019). In this paper we analyse the narrative of the curriculum documents published by the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, searching for metaphors, as well as metonymies, personifications, and blends that reveal how the 'ideal learner' is portrayed within the current education policy.

By applying cognitive linguistics theories and methods for the identification and analysis of figurative language (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Fauconnier and Turner, 2002; Kövecses, 2005; Casasanto and Gijssels, 2015), we discuss the conceptualisation of the 'ideal learner', their characteristics, the educational processes outlined for them, and the internal and external influences shaping their development. We examine the translatability of the curriculum created around the envisioned 'ideal learner' — reminiscent of a Renaissance man — into the practical realities of education, considering the diverse interests and talents of learners, particularly in mixed-ability classrooms. This possibly suggests that the idea of discourse as being socially constitutive or conditioned (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 258) may not be applicable to the policy narrative, which portrays a utopian, wished-for reality.

Keywords: narrative, metaphor, figurative language education policy, ideal learner, conceptualisation

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