

Creating multidisciplinary collaboration between pedagogical child care and social services personnel in a Danish well fare context to promote positive change for vulnerable children

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Context and aim

Socially and emotionally vulnerable children are being overlooked by Danish childcare¹ due to a lack of identification. Studies show that childcare-personnel have great difficulty identifying and describing children at-risk and collaborating with social service personnel, however little research has been conducted on multidisciplinary collaboration and its potentials to change developmental pathways of these children.

This work in progress is aimed at generating a multidisciplinary intervention to facilitate the transition from childcare to school for children at-risk in terms of reducing social and emotional difficulties.

The objectives are

- 1) to create a coherent multidisciplinary collaboration and intervention between personnel within childcare and social services
- 2) to assess whether multidisciplinary collaboration efforts may facilitate the transition from childcare to a school setting

The Danish society is based on the Scandinavian well fare model which means that multidisciplinary collaboration is embedded in a context that is highly regulated by law and local economy. Furthermore there is a significant political focus on multidisciplinary collaboration on early intervention as a mean of reducing social problems. The necessity for research in this area is predominant. This work is the first Danish study that focuses on the outcome of multidisciplinary intervention.

Method

The approach to Action Research in this study is based on the participation of and dialogue between different disciplines within the social area.

The objective is to facilitate new ideas and actions of intervention and new kinds of collaboration between childcare and social services personnel aimed at children at-risk and their parents – as well as to generate knowledge on this process.

Participatory and dialogue facilitating processes are embedded on multiple levels

- 1) An ongoing participatory process including the central management
- 2) Involvement of childcare and social services personnel through interviews, multidisciplinary dialogues and actions in local areas and mono-professional improvement

The research process is carried out simultaneously bottom-up and top-down.

¹ Please note that in the Danish society pre-school does not exist. Children from the age of 1 are placed in childcare i.e. a pedagogically supported environment emphasising exclusively on social skills. Approximately 90% of all children at the age of 3 to 5 attend childcare on an everyday basis

Data and results

In order to provide documentation of the study, data are collected systematically from the participatory processes within the organization.

50 children are followed through the transition from childcare to school. The changes are recorded through two SDQ measurements from both the parents and the professionals involved in the particular case (one measurement before actions of collaboration and intervention and one after the child's transition to a school setting).

The intervention is documented through interviews with the parents as well as childcare and social services personnel involved in the particular multidisciplinary early intervention.

The project is roughly one year old which is why the results may be regarded as preliminary.

Results are so far available from 1) interviews with the professionals on multidisciplinary collaboration and 2) the participatory processes carried out on several organizational levels.

Challenges in Action Research

1) Transparency and collection of data

Collecting data in a transparent and scientifically acceptable way is challenging. Documentation demands place significant constraints on the kind of possible learning processes to be initiated within the organization, and consequently on the quality of data and results.

2) Sustainability and the development of relationships within the organization

A scientifically seen essential precondition for sustainability and commitment in the study participants is the maintenance of continuous development of collaboration on all levels, i.e. between professionals, professionals and management, and different levels of management.

3) Role of researcher and the role research play in interaction with the organization

The researcher is by society positioned as a 'privileged witness of truth', which is a very powerful position that needs to be administered with respect for local knowledge and experience – otherwise the study may end up being very one-sided and with useless data.