

Day Care Work as the Creation of Coherence in Everyday Life

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Day care institutions serve a central function in modern society; not least because taking care of children is a prerequisite for parent's participation in the labour market. This is certainly the case in Denmark, where 90 % of children attend day care institutions. In this sense, day care institutions are a prerequisite for a sustainable everyday life in modern society. Without day care for children it is not possible for families to create a coherent everyday life. At the same time, life in day care institutions shares a lot of similarities with everyday life. It is extremely important and yet hidden, unnoticed and invisible (Bech Jørgensen 1988, Bloch 1988, Baagøe Nielsen 2005). This is a central work condition for the kindergarten teachers who work in day care institutions.

A central hypothesis in our research project, "Developing and strengthening the professional competences of kindergarten teachers: confronting neoliberal regulation", is that a great deal of the work of kindergarten teachers is oriented towards creating coherence in the every life of children and their families. But this central function is threatened by neoliberal forms to the regulation of work in day care institutions.

In recent times, a number of neoliberal forms of regulation have been implemented in day care institutions. For example, there are now demands that institutions prepare specific plans for enhancing and testing children's linguistic development. These forms of regulation tends to separate certain "learning" activities from other activities of "ordinary care", and to classify them as more important (Bernstein, 2000). At the same time, these activities seem to offer the professionals a chance to shed light on their otherwise hidden, unnoticed and invisible work. But we think that the professional competences of the kindergarten teachers are expressed in many other activities and situations in the everyday life in day care institutions. Our project intends to raise awareness of how professional competences (In Danish: "faglighed") are expressed in many ways other than those that the neoliberal forms of regulation focus on. This should be used to formulate political alternatives to neoliberalism based on the necessity of a coherent and sustainable everyday life.