English summaries

Helena Ackesjö & Sven Persson: Children's experiences of social communities in the transitions to and from preschool class

The focus of this study is children's transitions to and from preschool class, which in Sweden is a voluntary first year in school. The exit from preschool and entry to school may in many ways be regarded as a critical event in the child's life, and international research shows that nearly half of the children are concerned about this transition. Research has also suggested that a good socio-emotional foundation provides better conditions for learning in the primary school years. The aim of this study is therefore to gain knowledge about how children reason about the transitions to and from preschool class, and how transitions affect children's peer relationships and belonging in social communities.

Wenger's theory of communities of practice is used to understand the impact of transitions from children's perspective. Communities of practices are based on common actions and are, according to Wenger's definition, focused around maintaining a mutual engagement in common activities. Wenger theory has also been used to understand and analyze various forms of communities. We use the general term social community to describe the affiliation (belonging according to Wenger's terminology) that children describe that they experience with other children in an institutional context. In Wenger's theory, the border concept is central. Social communities are constructed and given meaning in different ways depending on how the borders are marked, and depending on who is included or excluded. Based on this theory, the transitions to and from preschool class become transitions between different social communities.

The empirical data have been constructed during a longitudinal ethnographic field work that spanned over 18 months - over two transitions between three different school forms (preschool, preschool class and school). The study has an ambition to place the child's own contributions and experiences of transitions in the foreground, and we use the concept of *children's perspectives* as their opinions and experiences are described. The empirical data consists of interviews, individual conversations and group discussions about peer relationships in the transitions, conducted with the children in the three different school forms. In addition, observations of certain critical events have been analyzed.

The results show the important role that peer relationships have for the children in transitions between different school forms. Children's groups are scattered in each transition to a new school form, indicating that the children are moving in different directions. The results therefore indicate that transitions are not always to be characterized as collective processes. The transitions involve processes of continuity and discontinuity, since the conditions for children's participation and position in social communities are changing. Continuity and discontinuity in transitions are perceived differently by different children, and are given different meanings depending on how the children consider and understand themselves. The transitions require children to re-orient themselves in new social communities and physical rooms. The discontinuities in transitions therefore requires a form of increased reflexivity i.e. children are forced, for better or worse, to reflect on themselves as individuals.

Physical discontinuity is often positive experienced and associated with anticipation and excitement by children. This can be related to the knowledge of "starting something new". In the transition to preschool class, the preschool environment is replaced with school environment, and several of the children expressed that this means new opportunities and challenges for them. However, the *social discontinuity* seems to place other demands on children. Each transition and entry into a new context, and into a new group of children, involves a re-orientation and a re-definition of both themselves and of their affiliations. For most children this is no problem, but some children describe that they have lost their reference points in the transitions. The separation from the old community can be difficult to handle. These children have been separated from a perceived affiliation and social community in preschool, and describe how difficult it can be to enter into new communities in new school forms.

Several of the children describe that almost every spring semester in preschool (as well as in preschool class) have resulted in separations and breakups. Thus, the beginning of the autumn terms has been characterized by new entries and adjustments to new children and new teachers - breakups have become a part of children's institutional lives. In their search for strategies to manage the social discontinuity, the children uses past experiences. Some children have conquered what we call *transition competences* based on past experiences, which they use when seeking new social communities in new school forms.

Previous research has shown that children who start school with peers can get a head start in learning, because peers adds a sense of belonging and continuity when many other things are changing. Based on the results of this study, it may be appropriate to further consider how it is possible to prevent or eliminate involuntary interruptions in children's important relationships during transitions. This study has shown that children care about their relationships and they express a need for social continuity. To "belong" is from a child's perspective important in transitions.

Jens Ineland & Lennart Sauer: Kulturella aktiviteter för personer med utvecklingsstörning – en pedagogisk utmaning

The aim of this article is to describe and analyze different perspectives on the goals and methods in cultural activities for people with intellectual disabilities. The empirical material is based on two studies, one of which consisted of a questionnaire addressed to 27 different organizations within the field of disability culture and a case study that was carried out at a theater organized as part of a daily activity in a medium-sized Swedish municipality. The results show a duality between different institutional logics within cultural practices for people with intellectual disabilities. This is reflected in both the goals and the methods used in the studied practices. Their ambitions was to both carry out activities with artistic quality and at the same time implement more ideologically motivated goals and objectives within disability policy. In the latter of these aims and objectives was more explicitly linked to people with intellectual disabilities. Also the methods analyzed indicated disparate ambitions where societal and organizational goals related to artistic and illuminating ambitions while individual goals mainly focuses on the social, cognitive and emotional development of persons with intellectual disability(ies) . As social hybrids, cultural activities raise pedagogical issues of more general importance concerned with how they as welfare state practices (social services, schools, e.g.) deal with the double logics and how they motivate and legitimizes the work focus, purpose and goals. Our results show that both goals and methods used reflected these different logics between art and therapy. For instance, what we called the artistic and therapeutic methods are illustrations of this as they concerned both artistic quality and realization of disability policy. Also the goals reflected a duality where societal and organizational goals related to artistic and illuminating ambitions while individual goals mainly focus on individual people's social, cognitive and emotional development. As social hybrids, cultural activities for people with intellectual disabilities encompass an educational dilemma; they need to engage in things that are expected of them both as welfare state practices and a cultural arena. All in all, this means that on the one hand they need to produce various performances in order to be artistically legitimate and on the other hand they need to realize concepts and aims stipulated by the disability policy – such as participation, autonomy and empowerment. Our results illustrate a pedagogical challenge: how do cultural activities for people with intellectual disabilities both maintain affiliation to its welfare policy environment (Schools, Social services, etc.) and to predominant themes in civil society such as identity, social roles and subcultural belonging.