

On how to engage surrounding people in the introduction of a new child - A case from the daycare institution Sølund in Denmark

Sølund is a Danish 0-6 year-old daycare institution that houses 36 nursery children and 50 kindergarten children, divided into two groups and 17 staff members, both men and women. The institution is situated in both Copenhagen city and in a rural area. Every two weeks the two kindergarten groups change locations between the city and the rural area. The case takes place in one of these groups.ⁱ In a Danish daycare context, children in general attend daycare 5 days a week.

A four-year-old boy arrives in Denmark with his family from another European country because the father has obtained a job in Denmark. The boy and his family only speak their mother tongue, but the parents also speak English. The question is how to introduce this new child into the kindergarten group?

Before arrival, the professionals (i.e. staff with a BA in social education) plan the introduction of the child. As they talk about their main goals, one social educator stress, “Inclusion is not something that takes place on Tuesday from 10-12”. They decide that one social educator is appointed the main responsibility for introducing the child and his parents to the daycare center during his first days.

On arrival, the social educator make sure to explain the parents how they work and which educational principles they have. Here the social educator stress the importance of cooperation and continued dialogue, especially as the parents of course possess key knowledge on their child. After welcoming the child and his family, the social educators gather all 25 children in a circle. This week the group is in the rural kindergarten and they choose a place that the children know well, where they feel safe, sit comfortably, and where other children at the institution do not disturb the group. The primary social educator introduces the group to the boy and his parents. The children are told that the new child does not speak Danish. So in order to communicate with him everybody have to use signs/show him around etc. The invitation to communicate with signs and showings make the children experiment with ways of communicating with the child. In the circle, the children also talk about the boys’ home country vs. Denmark, the food he eats and the food other children eat, games that are played etc. This

introduction is done in a way where the social educator asks questions to the children who then provides answers.

During this first and following days the social educators are particularly interested in following the tracks of the new child and the rest of the children, what they do, who they play with, what they like, what they do not like, and what they do not do etc. They hereby identify other children as co-actors in relation to the boy's introduction. This observation results in the decision to place the new boy together with another boy of the same age, because they have both sought out each other. The social educators make sure that the boys sit together in the bus going to the rural kindergarten. That they sit next to each other during meals. And the first excursions are centered on the new boy and his friend, and only gradually more children comes along. During the first weeks, the social educators are also focusing on how not to disturb the new boy and his friend if they are in the middle of playing. For instance, the two boys are several times left inside undisturbed as the other children go outside to play.

Questions

- ❖ What do the social educators do in order to include the new child into the daycare center?
- ❖ Identify 2 specific pedagogical strategies and why the social educators choose these strategies?
- ❖ Who are the most important persons/groups for enabling the inclusion of the new child?
- ❖ “Inclusion is not something that takes place on Tuesday from 10-12”. What does the mean by saying that?
- ❖ When do you think inclusion take place?

ⁱ (This case is an extract. You can read more about the Danish child care system (p. xx) and Sølund Kindergarten and their pedagogical work (p. xx) here ([indsæt link](#)))