

The social educator¹ as facilitator of social inclusion in a Danish kindergarten

Stenurten is an integrated day care institution at Nørrebro; a densely populated area of Copenhagen. The institution has 25 % bilingual/trilingual children, mostly western languages and only few Middle Eastern languages. The families are well functioning both socially and economically, but many are uncertain about their role as a parent. The institution has three kindergarten groups that take turns going to a rural kindergarten one week at a time throughout the year. In a Danish daycare context, children in general attend daycare 5 days a week. The following two cases from Stenurten reflects on how social educators can facilitate social inclusion in everyday life.

Case A:

Through a long period of time, Sophie, a four year-old kindergarten child has been swinging alone. The social educators have observed how Sophie is very introverted and has difficulties contacting other children and they have decided that she needs help in creating friendly relations. The social educators agree on a special focus on Sophie and plan to both organize and take spontaneous steps to get Sophie into some existing games and relations.

One day, in the rural kindergarten, Sophie, after again being alone on the swing, suddenly leaves the swing and moves into the periphery of a game between two girls from the group. The girls do not notice Sophie and Sophie takes no further initiative to enter the game.

One social educator sits on a bench between Sophie and the playing girls. She does not say anything and she does nothing. After a while the girls notice the social educator and they invite her – not Sophie - to join their game. The social educator joins the game and invites Sophie into the game. They all play together for a while. The teacher withdraws and the three girls continue their game.

Case B

In the rural kindergarten, three boys at age five are in the middle of a game without any grown-ups. They are pirates on a ship. Kasper is captain, Jonas controls the canons and Bo has the observation post, and they all identify with their different roles. Kasper quickly declares himself

¹ In Danish nurseries and kindergartens 2/3 of the staff have a BA in social education.



as the leader of the ship, which is ok with the other two. They choose different roles and the game is going on well...

Kasper: Can you see anything out there Bo? Bo: Yes, just ahead there is a shark! Kasper: I'll sail over there so we can shoot him! Jonas: I'll manage that as soon as we get over there! When they reach the shark Jonas makes noises to illustrate his shooting and killing the shark. Bo: That was a good job - you killed it with the canons. Kasper: Yes, that was good work! Now we must sail on...

A social educator comes up to the boys after they have been playing together for quite a while. He squats down asking if he may join them. All three boys agree with great enthusiasm. Jonas grabs an extra action man next to the ship, gives it to the teacher saying: You can be him! The teacher sits next to them participating in the game. Kasper explains what they are doing: We sail around keeping an eye on everything! Bo: Yes and you have to be somebody on the ship – you must do something! Social educator: Ok – then I could be a soldier and if anything happens, I could help! The three boys find this is a good idea and the game continues in this way and new ideas arrive and are acted upon.

Questions

- ❖ Consider, whether the interaction of the social educator in both case A and case B is facilitating inclusion? And if yes, please explain how?
- ❖ Discuss when a social educator should enter a game in order to facilitate inclusion. Also, discuss how to make professional judgements about whether or not to enter childrens' games/interactions?
- ❖ The social educators at Stenurten argue that relations are key to social inclusion – how do the social educators link relational pedagogical work and social inclusion?